

Voice Box

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

Summer 2023 £4



All the news from Harmony College, meet our new LABBS Chair, and fancy dress rehearsals!



Plus! *The Road to International* updates, stepping into the MD's shoes, and more!

Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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Chair's Forward

Well, it only seems like yesterday that I was taking up the role of Vice Chair and here I am writing my first piece for VoiceBox as Chair. They say time flies when you are enjoying yourself and I guess that must be true. For those of you who are thinking 'Who is this person?', I have been Vice Chair for two years, and I've been singing with Cheshire Chord Company for about eight years. I also sing with a small unaffiliated mixed chorus, and I play the piano for my local Ukrainian choir.

I cannot start my tenure without thanking Natalie for her untiring work for the last two years, bringing the Association through the pandemic and back to face-to-face conventions, while visiting choruses the length and breadth of the UK. Thank you, Natalie, and enjoy your well-earned rest. While Natalie visited choruses herself this is not always practical for an individual to manage, so from now on all board members will be visiting clubs around the country, which we hope will continue to keep the links that Natalie has formed between Board and members fresh and vital.

As many of you will know, we have a Facebook group

for LABBS members: *LABBS Members Discussion Forum*. As part of being available to every member, I am planning to host a video chat in the group, on the first Sunday of each month at 10.30am. All members are welcome to join me for a chat, to ask questions, or to comment on any aspect of LABBS. To share in this you will first need to join the Facebook group: search for it on Facebook and click 'Join Group', or click [here](#). Once you've joined, head over to the group on the first Sunday of the month, and click on 'Sue's Room'.

At the AGM we welcomed Mel Baber and Christine Tyler to the Board with responsibilities for Marketing and Communication and Diversity and Inclusion, respectively. They are both getting used to their new roles and you will no doubt hear more from them and about them as time goes on and they get to grips with things. Mel has stepped in for David Kitchenham, who unfortunately had to resign from the Board for health reasons. We wish him well and thank him for his work. Of course, we must also congratulate Jill King who was appointed Vice Chair at the AGM, and at the time of writing, we're advertising for a



Membership Director to take over her old role.

Looking forward, there are exciting times ahead. Our first LABBS representatives will be competing in the USA this year and next, and around the country there are many choruses increasing their numbers and developing their craft. Don't forget that our LABBS Liaison Officers are waiting to hear from you if you would like to talk to someone about your chorus, and a list of LLOs and their contact details can be found [here](#). Our Board members are also ready to answer any questions or queries you may have, or to listen to your suggestions and comments. We are all here for our members, and I look forward to hearing from you and meeting you over the next two years.

Sue Ranson
LABBS Chair

Deadline for next edition: Friday 28th July 2023

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](#).

2023 Deadlines: Friday 28th July, Friday 3rd November.

Update from your Editor

Writing this in the days

following Harmony College, I've still got that inner barberglow which persists after you return home from an event such as this.

Having not been to HC before, it's fair to say I was a little apprehensive about what to expect, and I know I wasn't



the only person feeling that way! What I, and others, discovered over the weekend is there was no reason to be nervous. What an incredibly supportive, positive environment I found myself in, and what a wonderful bunch of people I found myself amongst. Between the singing, the education, the afterglows, and the friendships made or renewed, it really was a fantastic weekend. You can read more about others' experience of HC throughout this edition, and don't forget to check out the photos on the [LABBS Members Discussion Forum](#) on Facebook, too.

I was also struck by how many people gave up their time to make HC such an incredible weekend. An event like this cannot happen without their tireless dedication to our Association and all who are members of it. Thank you to each and every one of you, but particularly to Harmony College Dean,

Debi Cox, for the huge amount of work she put in to make the weekend such a success.

LABBS runs entirely on volunteer power, and while we're all familiar with the larger events our Association hosts, there is a lot of day-to-day work which goes on behind the scenes, too. Many hands make light work, and with that in mind, if you've ever thought you might like to get involved, be that as a regular volunteer or just for an hour or so at an event, please do get in touch with our Chair, Sue Ranson, at chair@labbs.org.uk.

Until the next edition (unless I see you at Prelims!),

**Mel Baber, Editor
VoiceBox**

Champs Corner

Championship adventures

IN HOUSE are excited to report our latest championship year adventures, and update you on fundraising towards our forthcoming trip to represent LABBS at the BHS International Convention in Louisville this July.

We've just returned from an amazing weekend at LABBS Harmony College where we were completely blown away by members' support and generosity in our fundraising efforts, which when added to our total so far, brings us even closer to our £4K target. Through selling raffle tickets, IN HOUSE pin badges, general donations and a bucket collection, we raised £1076.49! We can't thank everyone enough for their kindness, support, and good luck wishes. It was so great to meet so many people at HC and we hope to see many of you at upcoming events too! Thank you once again from the bottom of our hearts. Highlights from our weekend included meeting lots of you at social times, singing on the closing show on Sunday, and being coached under glass by Kim Newcomb on Saturday evening. An experience we will treasure.

It was a busy few weeks as we prepared for Harmony College as we were also special guests on *The Road to International Show*, hosted by The White Rosettes on 22 April. A great evening of top-notch harmony and friendship which we followed up with a full day of coaching with Dale Kynaston the next day. No rest for the wicked!

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to our fundraiser on 20th May along with the Breakfast Club Youth Champion Quartet, being LABBS representatives at BABS Convention in Bournemouth at the end of May,

then supporting LABBS Quartets at the end of June at the Quartet Prelims weekend. Add to this our weekly rehearsals and some coaching sessions for International, and that just about sums up where we're at!

Keep up to date with our adventures by following us on our [social media](#). Hope to catch up with many of you in person soon!

**Jo, Rachel, Jane, and Julie
IN HOUSE**



IN HOUSE and Kim, following their 'coaching under glass' session

Oh, what a night!

After months of preparation,

the day of our show, 'The Road to International', finally dawned. In partnership with Meantime Chorus, IN HOUSE quartet and Limelight quartet, we're all raising funds to help cover the cost of attending BHS International, and this show was our first major fundraiser. As with any event, there are always ups and downs along the way. But, as the morning rain clouds cleared and the sun appeared, it was full steam ahead, knowing that all the prior preparation would be well worth the effort.

While a small group collected the risers from our rehearsal hall, the rest of the choruses and quartets converged on Pudsey Civic Hall, ready for final rehearsals. With rehearsals complete, excitement to share the stage with such talent grew, and before we knew it we were donning dresses, applying makeup and finalising our vocal preparation. We were ready for Showtime.



The Road to International finale

And what an amazing sight to behold! A packed, cheering, auditorium greeted us as the curtains swung open and Jo Braham announced, "The White Rosettes". Our 30-minute set soon flew by, which only left us wanting to do more. Fortunately, a finale had been planned with all four groups joining together on stage to sing *All Is Found*, a beautiful arrangement from Meantime Chorus's MD, Simon Arnott. The afterglow was no less than magnificent, with the buzz of chatter and groups of various sizes bursting into song, including a surprise rendition of Cruella de Vil from Meantime!

Thank you to everyone who supported us with the show from backstage, front of house, buying raffle tickets and coming to see us. It was a joy to entertain you.

Finally, the fundraising has only just begun. If you were unable to attend the show but would still like to support us in attending BHS International, in Cleveland, Ohio, in July 2024 as the first LABBS chorus to qualify (we are so honoured to represent you all), you can make a donation on our [GoFundMe Page](#).

Ruth Kirby, PRO
The White Rosettes

Education

Harmony College 2023

What a weekend that was!

We knew it was going to be a cracker when we reached maximum capacity of on-site accommodation, and it didn't disappoint. Over 300 LABBS members and non-members gathered for a weekend of music, singing, learning, laughter, and friendship. They left with memories of a great time and their barbershop batteries fully recharged, having taken part in one of many streams on offer, from singing in one of two choruses, quartet coaching, director education, personal development, or the new Extreme Quartet stream.



Harmony College delegates, raring to go!

Here is what a few of the delegates had to say about their experience:

'Very, very nice weekend seeing everyone, buzzing around with quartets and choruses. Just fabulous – thank you!'

'Fab weekend! Looking forward to the coming year and working hard on all the things we learned.'

'Had the most amazing time! There's nothing more I can say – it's been absolutely fantastic!'

'I was so nervous about going. I've never done anything like this before and I was really stepping out of my comfort zone. I needn't have worried. It was such a supportive, welcoming environment and I've learned so much. When

can we do it all again?!'

'The weekend has been incredible and very, very useful. I loved it, and I love all my sisters!'

'Absolutely brilliant! I was so impressed by the enthusiasm, conscientiousness, and energy. It's just been really, really fabulous.'

'Just amazing. Have learned so much and it's been great to spend time getting to know everyone.'

'Really informative weekend, and everyone – faculty and participants – have been so supportive. It's been so good catching up with people too. And wow – such a great atmosphere!'



Harmony College Faculty

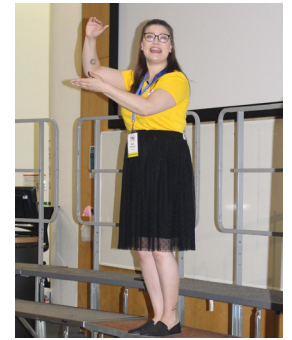
Delegates also benefited from the expertise of our guest educator, [Kim Newcomb](#), best known as a member of 2022 Sweet Adelines International Champion Quartet, [The Ladies](#). As well as spending time with each of the streams, Kim gave an inspiring keynote speech on Saturday morning. Talking us through her barbershop journey, Kim shared what

she'd learned about the value of the relationships we build with each other, and the positive impact they can have on the music we make together.

Harmony College is just one of the education events LABBS provide for our members. We also have a rolling programme of separate education events,

as well as supporting bespoke education for our choruses, quartets, directors, and music teams, all delivered by a faculty of high quality, experienced educators. For more information, please see the [Education pages](#) of the LABBS website.

**Debi Cox, Dean
LABBS Harmony College**



Kim Newcomb, warming us up on Sunday morning



The Blue Chorus, under the direction of Craig Kehoe



The Red Chorus, under the direction of Helen Lappert

Youth

Taking the leap

Complete with the rippling waters of a lake, the honking of geese and a glorious sunny taste of summer, there was a warm, friendly, and energetic atmosphere both inside and out at Harmony College. The whole wonderful weekend was a dream come true for me, and being part of the Extreme Quartetting stream had an unbelievable effect on my development as a barbershopper.

Before Harmony College, I had never sung in any kind of quartet, and I was transitioning to a new voice part so I wasn't sure if I could handle it musically. Plus, not having a local chorus to attend, I wasn't sure if I could handle it socially. Being fairly new to barbershop too, you might think me mad for signing up to the EQ stream. Attending it alone was a daunting prospect, but luckily for me I'm a member of the LABBS Youth Chorus.

I would not have signed up for HC without their support, enthusiasm and encouragement, and I definitely would not have been brave enough for EQ. The members of LYC are from all around the UK and they're all so passionate about barbershop that you're guaranteed to find at least a few of them at any barbershop event, meaning you're never truly going to an event alone. I knew I'd have a good base of people to chat and sing with during breaks and afterglows, and I knew that with connections in so many different choruses, they'd help

me meet new people as well. They reassured me that I was capable of doing the EQ stream and gave me the confidence to take the leap. I was also lucky enough to receive a LABBS Youth Members Education Fund grant, to help support my attendance which, as a full-time student, was crucially important.



Oh EQ! quartet: tenor Sephi, lead Fi, bass Rhona, and bari Pen

I am so glad I overcame my nerves and went, and I was correct about my fellow LYC members supporting me and helping me find my feet. As a result, I had an absolutely incredible weekend. I met so many new, amazing people, making connections and friendships that truly make me feel part of the larger barbershop community. I even found some potential members for our LYC family which is always exciting! I developed a huge amount as a singer, making big breakthroughs with vocal and emotional performance but also with confidence, thanks entirely to singing with so many fantastic singers both during EQ and at the fabulous afterglows. On Friday, I had never quartetted before; by Sunday I felt happy jumping into a quartet with anyone and everyone, and having a good time with it, too! All of my hesitation is gone - sign me up for the next barbershop event asap please!

**Rhona Lonergan
LABBS Youth Chorus**

Junior Fascinating Rhythm celebrate Eisteddfod success!

Junior Fascinating Rhythm recently celebrated

another successful year at the Thornbury Arts Festival. Both junior and secondary (school age) groups did brilliantly, gaining a Distinction and coming second in their class.

Junior FR's senior girls competed in the 'Choirs 18 and Under' category with *Something Stupid*. "The harmony lines were clear and well blended, bringing out the melody as it moved between the voice-parts", was the comment from adjudicator, Anna Marshall.

For their second song they sang the beautiful *Amazing Grace* to the music of Pachelbel's Canon, of which the adjudicator said, "The harmony singing was accurate and well balanced with



JFR Seniors

effective dynamics in the last section – well done!"

The junior girls competed in the 'Choirs 11 and Under' category with *Doll on a Music Box/Truly Scrumptious*. The adjudicator commented, "You fitted the two parts together successfully in this stylish and focused performance". They followed this with *Let's Go Fly a Kite*. The adjudicator praised "every singer for concentrating so much and watching and listening intently".

Junior FR's Musical Director, Wendy, said "I'm beyond proud of the juniors and seniors for their performances. They have worked really hard, and both attained 89 marks, coming second in each of their classes".

12 girls also performed in solo and duet categories, and they all did exceptionally well. A couple of the girls also demonstrated their confidence by introducing choreography.

Consider Yourself was performed by one of JFR's youngest and newest members, Natalie, who won her class with an 'Outstanding', and her twin sister Beth, entertained the audience with sea shanty, *The Wellerman* in the 'Traditional under



JFR Juniors

11' class. This was also Beth's first time competing in the Eisteddfod.

Three members entered the non-competitive category with their a cappella arrangement of *Hold Back the River*. Anne Marshall commented that they had a lovely blend and should continue with their close harmony singing. It was a great opportunity to take part in the festival and gain confidence to compete next year.

Four girls were invited to perform their solo and duet pieces in the finale concert and picked up further awards including 'Most promising vocalist'. Junior FR was given a special award by Kate Phillipson-Masters' choir, Cadence, in recognition of the work the JFR team does to train and bring on the next generation of singers, and "for generally being Just Great!"

**Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm**

Stepping into the MD's shoes

When BF's Music Team were planning events,

it was suggested we sign up for the Bristol Festival of Music, Speech, and Drama. We had such a brilliant time there in 2022! The 'problem' arose when Craig Kehoe (MD), realised the date clashed with the LABBS and BABS joint judging seminar, which Craig was due to attend. More importantly, he was being promoted to his new role of LABBS Singing Category Director!

Messages went back and forth between the Music Team, and then Craig wrote, 'We can do it, but only if Caroline can direct'. I remember the feeling of my heart jumping into my mouth at the thought of the responsibility. I took a deep breath, put on my big girl's pants, and said 'Yes!'. It's the best decision I've made in a long time, as then followed seven glorious rehearsals



Caroline and Bristol Fashion

where I had the joy of standing in front of my wonderful BF friends, directing them and us making music together.

We had a lot of hard work to do. I had to learn how to get the best sound from these musicians, to learn where the embellishments were, when different parts needed my support, or when to get out of the way so I didn't mess anything up that they were already doing well! My directing style is different to Craig's, so they had to learn how to work with me and understand what I was asking for with different movements and gestures, for them to produce the sounds I was hoping for. All that time, we had wonderful coaching from Craig. I felt so supported by his leadership, and able to just have a go and see what music I could produce while directing.

Competition day arrived! Even though I've been a Musical Director in the past, it had been many years since I'd stood in front of a chorus in public. I expected to be nervous but, because of our hard work and the faith I had in my wonderful BF team-mates, I felt surprisingly calm. And boy did we show them! 'Outstanding' and 90 points for all three classes, with wonderful comments from the judge:

'Aren't they marvellous?', 'You must be so proud of them!', and my favourite 'and you are just the Assistant!'

I felt privileged to work with this committed group of women (and chap!). There were moments during

Anthem which took my breath away, and I'll not forget the feeling for a long time. I try not to let fear stand in my way of exciting experiences and adventures, so I'm so happy I said 'Yes!'

'You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face' - Eleanor Roosevelt

**Caroline Bamford, Assistant MD
Bristol Fashion Chorus**



All smiles: Bristol Fashion's Assistant MD, Caroline Bamford

Barberlicious do love a good trip away!

We have a special place in our hearts for Holland Harmony for many reasons, so it made perfect sense to book a cheeky weekend away to Apeldoorn for the 2023 Convention. It was our first European trip as a quartet, and the first competition of our 10th anniversary year, so we had many things to celebrate!

After a seamless flight and transfer we arrived in Appeldoorn in the early evening, and by 8am the following day we were exploring our competition venue, the fabulous Orpheus Theatre. We bumped into old friends and familiar faces during our stage time (and the necessary caffeine fix afterwards!). This is something we all love about our barbershop community: catching up with people we haven't seen since the pandemic, and the years just fall away.

Due to a kink in the matrix, we weren't drawn first, second or third, so we had the luxury of having an actual rehearsal before our competition slot. We didn't know what to do with ourselves! No full face of make-up at 6am? No warming up while it's still dark outside? What madness! As always, we thoroughly enjoyed singing our set, and were delighted to make the final in the evening. After a swift dinner at the theatre (Holland Harmony really know how to feed their competitors - the food was absolutely fabulous), we were back in the dressing room and in finals mode! Performing to an audience is our absolute favourite thing, and we were overwhelmed with the energy and love we felt coming off stage!



We were so delighted with our silver medal, and huge congratulations to Hot Ticket and Karma, our fellow medallists, as well as everyone who crossed the stage over the weekend.

Anna Stutfield, Baritone Barberlicious

Harmony College Hen Do

That's not something many people can claim to have experienced, but it is what happens when a hoard of LABBS Youth Chorus (LYC) members descend on Nottingham!

I'd always been fairly low-key: I'd do my best but wouldn't often get fully stuck in. That all changed when I joined LYC as I've now found myself in a quartet with my best friends turned bridesmaids, had intensive one-to-one coaching with the best of the best, and given cowboy hats and rude straws to international gold medallist singers!

To say Harmony College was transformative for Chance Encounters

would be an understatement. We had two full days of coaching with a judge from each category - Music, Performance, and Singing - interspersed with Pick 'n Mix sessions reminiscent of university seminars. I spent my sessions singing tags with Kim Newcomb and learning about acoustics with Emma Shanks! At the end of the weekend, we got to perform one of the songs we had been working on to the 300 or so other delegates, and the response we got was overwhelmingly positive. It's left us feeling empowered and excited for the future of our quartet!



Chance Encounters at Harmony College

Next stop: Prelims!

**Sarah Thompson
Chance Encounters Quartet**

Good luck!

Perception was delighted to have been awarded the Senior Quartet Trophy at Prelims last year.

Each quartet member has to be over 55 years of age (tick) and the combined age of the quartet has to be at least 240 years (tick). We well exceeded both of those!

We would like to wish all competing quartets good luck at Prelims in June, but especially to the next recipient of the Senior Quartet Trophy.

Keep singing!

**Meryl, Julie, Glynis & Anne
Perception Quartet**



Perception with their Senior Quartet Trophy

Don't worry, be happy - SpecsAppeal at HC23

We'd recommend LABBS Harmony College to anyone

looking for a transformational singing experience. Our prelims package hadn't been coming together as we hoped over the winter, so we started the weekend with some trepidation. Our tenor, Hannah, summed up our experience



Hannah, Amy, Becky and Kate just Wannabe singing together!

on our group WhatsApp, though: 'Very exciting, very special, very renewed, and very tired.'

From the keynote speaker, Kim Newcomb, talking about relieving the pressure (one star performance mentality), to our fabulous faculty coaches - super-sub Tony Riley, Angela Sanchez-Rosemurgey, and Rachel Small - all helped us to sing more freely and with greater expression. Working with them we rediscovered our joy of singing together, and remembered we have some skills!

All this culminated in an amazing showcase experience. We knew our contest songs weren't ready to share just yet, so we picked something completely different to sing to Harmony College delegates: a madrigal we'd sung out a few times and thought the LABBS audience would enjoy. Oh



Gotta get with my friends!

my goodness, what a reaction. To say we were overwhelmed by the response on the day and afterwards, is such an understatement. Thanks for all the love, LABBS, we'll be paying it forward - #girlpower!

**Becky Isted
SpecsAppeal**

We EQ'd! Did You?

It had been just 205 days since Catherine Phillipson and I had our first meeting with Debi Cox to discuss the possibility of introducing a 'Treble Clef' Extreme Quartetting stream to the LABBS 2023 Harmony College. Then, there everyone was, gathered together on Friday night into a small room singing all six songs in a chorus format. Soon after, EQers split off into smaller groups to work on the songs - the quartet magic was to wait until Saturday!

Saturday morning soon came, accompanied by an element of relief when my only 'missing' delegate - a baritone - entered the room, and we were complete: 44 singers all ready to start quartetting, and the main event of the day - 'Lead Dating' - began. This involved each lead staying in their own nominated rooms while the harmony parts moved around in a predetermined way to sing the songs



One Clap: (L-R) tenor Mariane Lingley, bass Liz Smith, Liam, lead Lucy Black, and bari Sarah St. Leger-Honeybone.



specified. By evening, after some individual quartet coaching from LABBS judges, everyone voted for the three people they most enjoyed singing with who would form our EQceptional Quartet, be coached by Kim Newcomb on Sunday morning, and feature in the Harmony College Showcase Performance on Sunday afternoon. During the afterglow everyone was trying to sing with those they hadn't crossed paths with during the day to gain stickers, in the hope of winning an EQ mug!

On Sunday morning, both the EQceptional Quartet and a randomly drawn quartet received coaching from Kim, and three other lucky people got to sing in quartet with her. While some EQers went off to experience a Harmony College Pic 'n Mix session, others decided to practise with their randomly selected quartet ahead of that afternoon's quartet contest.

Sunday afternoon saw eleven apprehensive quartets sing for BABS and LABBS judges and it was One Clap who were victorious with great



The EQceptional Quartet: (L-R) tenor Chloe Cale, lead Kate Crichton, Kim Newcomb, bass Colleen Potter, bari Sausage Slade.

performances of *Let's Live It Up* and *When I Fall in Love*. Less than one hour later they were performing in the Showcase to the whole college!

The weekend went by in a flash, and I was so proud of all the crew for their hard work and effort in making the stream such a success - I can't wait until the next time! If you can't either, or are interested in trying Extreme Quartetting for the first time, the next event will be at [BABS Harmony College](#) at the end of August.

**Liam Buswell, EQ Stream Leader
LABBS and BABS Harmony College**



The crazy EQ stream after a long weekend!

Holland Harmony – what a treat!

I was thrilled to accept an invitation from the Board to represent LABBS at Holland Harmony's Sing Festival in Apeldoorn in March. Caroline Poole accompanied me on the trip, and we were made very welcome by President Leonie Vink and her team.

The festival weekend took place in the impressive Orpheus Theatre and we were treated to some fantastic barbershop singing as well as amazing performances from Midtown, the 2022 BHS silver medallist quartet from Manhattan, New York.

There was plenty of UK representation which was great to see and hear, and what a delight to be able to present our own Barberlicious quartet with their international silver medals.

It was lovely to reconnect with our friends from Holland Harmony, IABS and BinG! after such a long time away, and it was wonderful to see that barbershop singing is still very much alive and kicking!

Nancy Philbin
Past Chair, LABBS



Nancy and Midtown



Nancy with Holland Harmony President, Leonie Vink



Nancy with IABS' Ailbhe Hayes (L) and Noeleen Chow



Nancy and Silke Ostendarp from BinG!



Nancy with international silver medals, our very own Barberlicious

Crown Derby at the BHS Midwinter Convention

Crown Derby was delighted

to be the first BABS mixed quartet to qualify for the BHS Midwinter Convention International Senior Quartet contest, held in Daytona Beach, Florida, back in February. We met up at the start of contest week to see whether we could still remember what songs were in our 22/23 set, all their notes and words, and what our esteemed coaches had recommended. Well, we were BABS senior champs after all. Good news! Confidence restored, we agreed to meet again on Thursday. Time for a couple more theme parks, state parks, the Space Centre, and sunshine!

After our more focussed rehearsal on Thursday, we watched the youth quartet contest. Though only of high school age they were amazingly talented and confident. We audience members practised doing standing ovations, which came in handy later on. And most of us needed the exercise!

At the chorus festival on Friday morning, held in the grand Peabody Auditorium, the senior male choruses presented the familiar two-song packages. We were impressed by their standard, and energy, and idly fell to wondering how many

LABBS and BABS choruses could field a contest-worthy group of singers aged 55+. We were completely blown away by the amazing talent of the young singers and the creativity of their educators too. You can see the best performances [here](#).

We were delighted to receive first rate

prepared ourselves and remarkably calm, we gave what we thought was our best performance ever and were delighted later when people came up and said how much they'd enjoyed it. One fellow even told Karen we'd converted him to mixed voice singing! When the results came out, we'd achieved 68.9% and 17th place in a tight group.

Finishing in the top 20 is satisfying and we were the top European mixed quartet.

After the evening show, packed with amazing quartets including Quorum, GQ and Vocal Spectrum, where once again the practice at standing O's proved worthwhile, we braved the afterglow to present our Carpenters set, pleased that we weren't on stage right after any of those icons! We left Daytona Beach pleased to have had the opportunity to sing

to a wonderful audience, and incidentally claiming another first for Karen and Delyth who are now the first British (and LABBS!) women to sing on a BHS contest stage. Thanks so much for all your support (especially Natalie!).

**Dick, Karen, Delyth and Paul
Crown Derby**



Crown Derby

evening-of-contest polishing from Gaynor Schofield, who from a standing start pulled together much of our earlier advice and set us up beautifully. The senior quartet contest should have been opened and closed by the retiring International champions, BABS' own One Foot In the Stave, but agonisingly, lead Brian Schofield had lost his voice so they couldn't perform. Feeling well



Crown Derby performing at the BHS Midwinter Convention

Over hills and mountains to friendship and fun

We would walk 500 miles

– well it was a bit far to walk, but thirteen intrepid members of the most northerly LABBS chorus, Albacappella, based near Aberdeen, made their way over 400 miles south to attend Harmony College. Some took three trains, running between platforms at tight connections, and others drove for nine hours to arrive in Nottingham – delighted to see the sunshine!

As well as taking part in the red and blue choruses, some of us took the



Directors' Stream and the Personal Development Stream. Baris, basses, leads and tenors, members old and new - we had a fantastic turnout.

Getting to LABBS events is always a struggle for Albacappella due to our location in the north-east of Scotland. In 2022 we had to pull out of convention in Bournemouth as the only available flight was withdrawn. We shouldn't have been surprised as the previous time we were in Bournemouth many of us got stuck at Gatwick, fog-bound, leaving us to hire cars, get trains and sleep on airport floors (don't worry, we did do some singing!).

So, we were delighted to get to Nottingham, and it was a fantastic event. We learnt lots – from singing into paper cups, minimal directing, to learning some new warm-ups and taking in some good advice on controlling nerves.

Our biggest take-away from Harmony College however, was the friendship. We all loved spending time in the quiet bar,



sharing our learnings from the day, and getting to know each other a bit better.

Yvette Rayner
Albacappella

Feeling empowered with a little help from my friends!

Three Capital Connection singers

travelled up to Nottingham this weekend to take part in Harmony College. Sue, who sings lead and has recently taken on the role of Assistant Director, participated in the Directors Stream, whilst Seager (baritone) and I (lead) attended the Personal Development classes. Each of us came home full of thoughts and ideas to implement both personally, in our quartets and as a chorus.

Sue: 'Before attending Harmony College, I felt very much out of my comfort zone participating in the Directors stream – a bit of Imposter Syndrome as I'd only been AD for the past year. But, I need not have worried. Liz and Jo were fantastic educators, so positive and encouraging! I came away feeling much more empowered and confident about my skills, and it gave me ideas on how I could implement things I learned this weekend in the future.'

Sharan: 'This was my first education event having discovered barbershop less than two years ago! It was a fantastic experience, and I came away feeling energised and excited about the songs to



All smiles at Harmony College: Sue, Seager, and Sharan

come! My take-home from the weekend is that even though we sing as one part of a collective, it's important that we each take ownership of understanding what we are singing, why we are

singing, and how we are singing! And also, that it is better to be authentic than to be perfect!

Seager: 'I've been singing barbershop for 36 years and have been to several Harmony College weekends in that time. I would say this was definitely one of the best I've attended! I learned so much, especially from the sessions on performance. I will be taking these learnings back with me in my role on the Performance Team. It just goes to show, it doesn't matter how long you've been singing, you never stop learning!'

The theme of mental health, cultivating positivity and friendship resonated with each of us, and the weekend gave us the opportunity to bond, not only with one another but also with our fellow barbershoppers. A fascinating, inspiring, and uplifting weekend!

Sharan Ghuman, PRO
Capital Connection

Amersham Rings the Changes

New Year, new focus, and this year we've set our sights on helping our members find their best, most self-assured voice - in the most fun way possible! So, simply buzzing with all the positive energy generated by our Love to Harmonise course, our marvellous Music Team came up with a strategy to do just that, in preparation for IABS in October.

At the top of the to-do list was a jam-packed coaching calendar to improve our unit sound. We've already been treated to a masterclass with the amazing Scott Kitzmiller, who gave us a crash course on his famous resonance matching technique. We also welcomed back Barbershop Legend, David Wright who, once again, brought out the best in us during a mega rehearsal-night session.

Sadly, a day with vocal coach Tanya Jenkins (maybe best known from her time with Quartet Champs, Finesse) was postponed, but we made up for it by having a Sunday

Funday, arranged at the last minute by our phenomenal Performance Team!

Another high priority was dialling up everyone's inner confidence, so our Music Team came up with a genius idea: Quartet Speed Dating! It was like a whole weekend of Harmony Brigade fun

squished into three hours and designed to boost singing boldness in a safe, non-judgmental situation. In the end, around 25 of us signed up. We learned a tag beforehand and used Anthem as our main song. People could pick any voice part they fancied (one brave bass even sang tenor!), or just stick to their usual section.

On the day, we were all divided into small groups which rotated so everyone got a chance to sing with as many different people as possible. Each group was overseen by either Helen Lappert, Rose Hopkinson or Boo de Bruin (all past Gold-medal Quartet champs!). We even had time to fit in a couple of whole group sessions too!

It made for an awesome afternoon, which everyone enjoyed - we've even got a few fresh quartets out of it!

2023 has been an epic year for us already and there are plenty more Amersham adventures in the pipeline, so watch this space!

Hils Apicella, PRO
Amersham A Cappella



2023 is looking good!

The start of a new year

is always welcomed in with our AGM. January saw us taking the opportunity to reflect on the previous year and welcome some new committee members.

In March, we competed at the North Wales Festival. Singing in the open category, we had an absolute blast performing three brand new songs. It was great to see fellow barbershoppers, Cambrian Chords and Affinity Show Choir, too! We have competed a few times in this festival, and it is always a great affair at Venue Cymru in Llandudno. It's a good experience for some of our newer members, and an opportunity to watch some other non-barbershop choirs perform.

During March we were delighted to welcome the talented David Wright to a Thursday rehearsal night. The last time we saw him was the week the world went into lockdown - thankfully we're

now on the other side of that! David is a genius and we loved how his knowledge and talent makes such a huge difference so quickly. He's also pretty good at arranging tags on the spot!

At the end of March our amazing Sue Ranson became the LABBS Chair. We're all so proud of the work she has achieved already and know that she will be an amazing ambassador for our fantastic association.

The rest of 2023 is looking pretty busy for Cheshire Chord Company, so make sure you keep up to date with everything Cheshire Chord by following our social media pages [@CheshireChord](https://www.instagram.com/CheshireChord).



Cheshire Chord Company at the North Wales Festival

Julie Phillips, PRO
Cheshire Chord Company

Bristol Fashion host their first 'Song in a Day' workshop

If there's one thing that Bristol Fashion love it's to share their love of barbershop with new voices! What better way to do that, than host a free workshop offering delegates the chance to dip their toe into the pool of four-part harmony.

Over 30 people signed up to join us in the most beautiful of settings, Westbury-On-Trym Village Hall, a stunning 19th century building, built to promote social and recreation improvement. Quite in keeping with our gift of giving music back to the local community.

The challenge was to learn a song, *Eight Days a Week* by The Beatles, and perform to an audience. We do love a good challenge!

The day was packed with icebreakers

involving vocal harmony and animal mimicry antics, and voice and body warm-ups, all led by members of BF.

Our MD, Craig, taught the song finish to start, using part duets to improve synchronicity, and of course got out those trusty paper cups! Singing into them gave our vocal folds a treat and resonance improved as the day went on! Debbie, our Performance lead helped provide the visual to the aural, and impromptu octets helped build confidence. Even our delegates joined in with these!

There were regular cake breaks, as well as a wonderful Sonic set - these ladies never fail to impress!

By the end of the day, they'd done it! Those fabulous delegates brought their



Craig working with octets

A-game and performed with us to their friends and family. You can watch our performance [here](#). We of course treated them to a BF song or two, too!

Our first workshop and the first of many, we are sure, was a fabulous success!

**Naomi Mallinson, PRO
Bristol Fashion**



Lamorna leading a warm up



Lead, Debbie Trotman, warming us up



Tenor - Bari duets

Singing is good for you!

Well, it certainly seems everyone thinks that way in York! The beginning of March saw the annual York Community Choir Festival and two members of Main Street Sound, Susan Blenkinsop and Jenny Whitehouse, were on the organising committee for this very popular event.

The festival started in 2016 with 11 choirs taking part over three concerts. In 2023, there were 33 choirs over eight concerts including no less than four barbershop choruses – Main Street Sound and Abbey Belles, and two male choruses, Spirit of Harmony and The Daytones. There are usually four choirs each night and Main Street Sound have taken part every year from the start of the festival - it was the last event we attended as covid struck! In

2022, Three Crown Sound from Hull were there too, but due to the number of choirs wanting to take part we had to narrow our catchment area this year!



Main Street Sound at York Community Choir Festival

The festival is a wonderful event which includes some school choirs, community choirs, a cappella groups, and almost every other type of

choir you can think of! Choirs have a performance time of 20 minutes, which gives plenty of time to showcase their particular style. This is a fundraising event for the Joseph Rowntree Theatre which is run entirely by volunteers, and this year over £7,000 was raised. All the concerts are recorded by York Hospital Radio and are broadcast by them at various times through the year. This year we were especially pleased to welcome Naomi Simon, BBC Young Chorister of the Year, who performed in one of the concerts.

It's a great opportunity to see other choirs perform, and it will soon be time to start planning next year's festival!

**Jenny Whitehouse
Main Street Sound**

All things new for Celtic Chords

We've been based in the small Cornish village of Perranwell for some time, but earlier this year we decided to look for a new venue. Amongst other things, we wanted somewhere closer to one of the bigger towns to give us a larger area to recruit from. And so, the hunt began in earnest.



Our new rehearsal space is overlooked by the very beautiful Truro Cathedral

After writing a wish-list of facilities, much discussion, a lot of googling, and some telephone conversations with potential venues, we thought we'd found 'the one', and so set up a viewing. From the moment we walked into The Moresk Centre, we knew it was perfect: light, spacious, and with plenty of room for sectionals and to store some new risers. The location, right in the middle of Truro City Centre (and with free parking!), was a bonus.

We moved in early April, and our new rehearsal space is everything we hoped for. OK, so we've only relocated five miles up the road, but it feels like a brand-new chapter for us. We've continued to run with the idea of 'all things new', and have fabulous new uniforms, new risers in the pipeline, and a summer A Capella Workshop planned to recruit some new members. It's an exciting time for us!

In other news, we were delighted to welcome then-Chair, Natalie Feddon, and LLO, Sandra Matanle, to a rehearsal in March. At the rehearsal before their visit, ladies had attended wearing something comfortable, as I'd wanted to take some photos of us having fun

together. Tenor Julia, always up for a laugh, came dressed as a 'naked' cow. Of course, I posted a [video](#) on our social media. The wording of my post resulted in an amusing miscommunication, and Natalie arrived in Cornwall with a leopard costume. CC ladies are nothing if not prepared for every eventuality though, and so Natalie's visit turned into an impromptu fancy dress rehearsal. Natalie's costume was fab, and we understand she attended the LABBS AGM the following weekend sporting leopard-print temporary tattoos, which weren't as temporary as she might have hoped!

**Sian Netherton, MD
Celtic Chords**



LLO Sandra Matanle, MD Sian, and Natalie

Singing to support mental health

It is widely reported that singing is a powerful thing and as we can all attest, it makes us feel good! Here at GraceNotes Acapella we regularly discuss how singing makes us feel, and how we emotionally connect to lyrics, melody, and chords. Increasing evidence suggests that singing can increase our happiness and positive mental health, and we love the sense of wellbeing that singing with others, friendships across generations, and giving back to our community, brings.

So, when Events Manager Kate was approached and asked if we would perform at a charity gala which focussed on promoting good mental health and empowering women, we jumped at the chance! ELEVATE is an annual event organised and hosted by Plymouth-based [Arterne CIC](#). Founded in 2016, Arterne supports local communities to achieve happy, healthy

lifestyles, and raises awareness about mental health. Their ELEVATE event is a very popular fundraiser which features local performers like GraceNotes.



GraceNotes at ELEVATE

We were honoured to perform two sets for a lively audience on Friday 3rd February, and we really enjoyed

supporting the other performers too. Showing others how singing with our chorus and working together to empower each other was not only great fun, but hugely fulfilling for us. We're grateful to Arterne for asking us to represent Saltash at their event, and for reminding us of the importance of female empowerment and community support.

Inspired by this event and our aims for 2023, GraceNotes Acapella have decided to offer our support to another local mental health charity. [Your Voice Cornwall](#) facilitates mental health peer support to women living across Cornwall, including in our home town of Saltash. We plan to help them with fundraising and spreading the word about the amazing work this group does.

**Shellie Joynes, PRO
GraceNotes Acapella**

Happy 10th anniversary to us!

Cleeve Harmony Chorus is celebrating its 10th anniversary in style throughout 2023, with parties, festivals, socials, and concerts galore!



Delicious, and very beautiful, birthday cake!

We were blown away by the love on social media and in person at our birthday party in February. Risers assembled, seating arranged, nibbles, prosecco, and cake at the ready, and our visitors arrived.

Amongst our guests were members of Avon Harmony, The Collective, and Vale Harmony, as well as former Cleeve Harmony members. Some friends even attended on Facebook live! We sang, reminisced, laughed. There were even a few tears. A truly memorable time was had, and a big thanks to everyone involved for your support.

Lindsey Draper, one of our leading ladies, composed a little ditty which really captures our feelings about chorus life in this special birthday year:

*Cleeve Harmony is 10 years old!
Cleeve Harmony is 10 years old!
Old? No way! Cleeve Harmony is 10 years bold
Bold, fabulous - and resilient, the truth be told!
We're all about that bass and forget about the price tag, yeah
But heart of my heart and beyond the sea is also where we can be
We breathe, we hum, we sing into a cup, we bubble
And the choreo gives some of us a bit of trouble*



Cleeve Harmony Chorus

*But we laugh and we chatter (is our MD as mad as a hatter?)
Each life is different, each voice unique, but we are together in song
And when the harmony flows, nothing is wrong
So we sing our own song, we kick butt with Bo Rap and our anthem is clear
We survived distancing, Zoom and lockdown - Cleeve Harmony is still here!*

Check out our Cleeve Harmony Chorus [Facebook page](#) and future VoiceBox issues to see what else we are getting up to celebrate turning 10.

Kate Clifford
Cleeve Harmony Chorus

A singing extravaganza

Fascinating Rhythm had the enormous pleasure of

sharing a concert with Gloucestershire mixed group [Go Vocal](#) and barbershop quartet [Off The Record](#), on 18th February at Mangotsfield School.



Off The Record

The variation in styles and songs gave the audience a feast of sound and entertainment. Fascinating Rhythm performed a selection of a cappella songs including *We Go Together* from *Grease*, *Titanium*, and *Feeling Good*, as well as our current barbershop competition package.

Fascinating Rhythm held its most recent 'Love to Sing' day in January, working on *Feeling Good*. Delegates were then invited to come along and polish the song over the next three FR rehearsals, and to perform the song with Fascinating Rhythm at the concert in February.

A huge well done to the five ladies who took the song from page to stage. One delegate said, *"I really enjoyed the Love to Sing workshop so jumped at the chance to join FR for a few rehearsals and to perform Feeling Good. I'm so glad I did it as it has reawakened a love of singing - I hadn't sung with a choir since I left school 40 years ago and it's given me the kick I needed to start again."*

Go Vocal, led by Linda Corcoran, gave an outstanding performance of show and pop songs, differentiated from FR by their inclusion of backing tracks. They also gave the audience a wonderfully atmospheric rendition of *Adiemus* by Karl Jenkins. Off The Record rounded out the concert with their own individual style, performing two short sets. They included their current competition package which has taken them through to the national semi-finals of this year's [BABS](#) quartet national championships. We wish them the very best for the next round and thank Paul Richmond for his fantastic and funny MC slots during the show!

Fascinating Rhythm's musical director, Jo Thorn, said, *"It was such a pleasure to share the stage with Go Vocal and Off The Record. I was also delighted we were able to share the stage with ladies who had*



Fascinating Rhythm

learned Feeling Good in just three weeks. As musical director it was wonderful to watch their development and confidence; I was very proud to be with them on stage".

We look forward to future performances and collaborations with these fantastic groups.

Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm



Go Vocal

Coast to Coast feels the love!

Coast to Coast, LABBS' national chorus, hosted a

wonderful singing weekend in February at the Leicester Hilton, largely organised by C2C's energetic new Chair, Chris Wilkin. C2C's Musical Director and LABBS singing judge, Angela Sanchez-Rosemurgey, welcomed guest coach and BABS singing judge Simon Lubkowski, for the weekend – a formidable duo! Natalie Feddon also came along, joining C2C members from across the country along with a number of other singers attracted by the opportunity to 'Sing with Simon.'

With humour, a lightness of touch, and a superbly professional approach, Simon guided the chorus and visitors through vocal exercises and production, and then introduced them to his own delightful arrangement of *Falling in*

Love with You. This, and *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, contrasted beautifully with Larry Wright's gutsy and pulsating *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*.

With The Hilton's chocolate brownies, the relaxing bar, and chorus member Carole Clarke's evening quiz (won by Simon's team, the modestly misnamed *No Hoppers!*), it was a completely exhilarating weekend.

As Angela commented afterwards, 'Saturday was so uplifting! Simon was great and had lots of super little pearls of wisdom. I hope we can do it again next year'.

C2C, which, starting with the pandemic, has hosted a number of popular online *Polecat Frenzies*, always welcomes visitors and new members at their monthly rehearsals in Leicester. C2C is perfect for those with a chorus who want a further barbershop fix (and let's face it, we're all a bit barbershop obsessed!), or for those with no time or desire for a weekly commitment. Why not join C2C and feel the love too!

For more information, please see www.singcoast2coast.co.uk.

**Christine Kyriacou, PRO
Coast to Coast**



Coast to Coast, visitors, and Simon and Natalie

March: a month of contrasts for Junction 14

After an unsettling start to the New

Year, we headed into spring with a sense of joy and sadness. The countdown was upon us for our wonderful MD, Hannah, to lead our last performance with her, but we also had two bookings and a social event, so there was much to look forward to.

The first event, on Saturday 4th March, was an invitation to perform at a concert celebrating International Women's Day, hosted by Alina Orchestra. We also got to sing together with all the other performers in a grand finale, including a string quartet, pianist, soloist and two other local choirs, singing *I Am Woman*. What a wonderful concert to be a part of.

On the following Saturday, 11th March, we took part in the Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts and managed to win the gold medal and trophy in the barbershop section, with a distinction. This was the 5th consecutive year we have won this award, but this year it was even more significant and special to us as this was the last performance with Hannah as our MD. A wonderful way to end her time with us after 15 years of dedicated service to our chorus.

On Thursday 23rd March we headed to the pub instead of rehearsals, to have a lovely send off for Hannah. We will miss her enthusiasm, teachings, sense of fun and boundless energy, but wish her well for the future. Junction 14 are now looking for a new MD, and anyone interested can contact us through our website www.junction14.org where there is a link to the job description.

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**



Winners! Junction 14 at Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts



We'll miss you, Hannah!



Harmony Inspires celebrates its most recent new members: Debbie Brooks, Membership Secretary Ness Chatterton, Fiona Chan and Jenny Priscott



In March, Harmony Inspires enjoyed a coaching weekend with Sally McClean

2023 with Silver Lining

We always have an exciting time in January, with our annual dinner giving us a chance to get together and banish the winter blues with a night of singing, eating maybe a drink or two!

We have awards for membership anniversaries and also crown our 'Barbershopper of the Year'. This year the BOTY went to Liz Mountain-Town who is a whirlwind of enthusiasm, always ready to help with a smile. She has been our Membership Secretary for the past two years, and always went out of her way to welcome new

members and make sure they knew what to expect at each step of their joining journey. She also is a member of our Costume Team which has found amazing new dresses for Convention in Harrogate; we can't wait to wear them.

The AGM at the start of February was a time for change, with five new committee members who bring new thoughts, ideas and suggestions to the team that keep the chorus going. Every chorus knows the importance of them, and it's great that we have a bunch of people happy to jump in and get involved.

We had great fun with Dale Kynaston at our coaching

day in March. Who knew that pronouncing a 'W' could initiate such discussion! It was a day to learn new warm ups and do lots of work on our convention package. Our new song is such fun to sing, and we are so looking forward to performing it for you in October.

And so to April. We have a fantastic 24 members going to Harmony College, in all streams from EQers, Chorus, Personal Development and of course, Directors. We hope to see lots of our friends there and here's to a fun filled weekend.

Heather Morton, PRO Silver Lining



BOTY Liz Mountain-Town with Chair, Janice White



Coaching with Dale

Music breeds more music!

It has been an exceptionally busy couple of months for More Harmony!

We had the enormous excitement of being amongst the final few choirs in the UK, vying to become part of the enormous 'Coronation Choir' singing in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of King Charles III. This involved interviews over the phone and on Zoom with a representative from the BBC team organising the project. Whilst we were piped to the post right at the final stage, it was an honour to make it so far through the application process, and the lovely comments we had about the chorus - both the sound we make when we sing together and the obvious sense of friendship between us all - will have us buzzing for weeks!

Our MD and AMD have had their question-setting caps on, as the chorus is now planning a charity quiz night in aid of Cornwall Hospice Care. This

charity means a lot to us as our founder member, Pauline, was taken care of at Mount Edgcumbe Hospice back in 2019, and earlier this year, former baritone, Di, was looked after at Cornwall Hospice Care's second location, St Julia's. We were honoured to sing at Mount Edgcumbe last Christmas and found it an exceptionally moving experience, so a huge amount of effort will be put into making the charity quiz night a success!



Generation Gap: Lesley, Emma, Liz, and Val

foursome - bass Nat, bari Alice, lead Barbara and tenor Lowenna - have picked a couple of songs to work on, have held their first fledgling rehearsals, and are excited to see where this new venture takes them. More Harmony's other quartet, featuring MD Lesley as tenor, AMD/Chair Emma as lead, section leader Liz singing bass, and section leader Val as bari, have also finally chosen a name for themselves (it only took them over a year).

Generation Gap Quartet - a play on the singers' difference in ages - are still working on a combination of old and new songs, and are absolutely loving singing together! As our much-missed Di's daughter Eve, a fellow More Harmony alumni, put it: 'music breeds more music!'

We were all excited to get back to rehearsals after our Easter break, and with lots of fabulous new songs to get our teeth into, it's looking like we'll continue to be busy as the summer approaches - just the way we like it!

**Emma Tofi, PRO
More Harmony**

Looking forward to summer

After a successful Christmas, Red Rock has started the year well, learning a new song and looking forward to a full summer of singouts.

We had the lovely Natalie Feddon visit us in March, during her last week as LABBS Chair. The chorus enjoyed her visit and got a lot of information, and

she also presented two of our ladies with their long service awards. Ann Dallen, one of our founder members, received her 25 years award, and Jude Rose, our amazing MD, received her 35 years award. We had a lovely evening with Natalie, with tea and cake and lots of singing.

Also in March, we donated our old heavy risers to a local school, Stover, leaving

room for some new lightweight ones. Stover school Bursar, Mr Jenkins, was delighted with the gift.

Now we are looking forward to our summer singouts, starting with the Coronation of King Charles III.

**Karol Robinson, Chairperson
Red Rock Acappella**



Natalie, Jude and Karol



Mr Jenkins and Karol



Karol, Ann and Natalie

New members for Singchronicity

Our membership had dropped off

significantly following Covid, to about a quarter of the usual number. Following an advertising campaign in local magazines, numbers have increased by half, and our new members are gradually learning songs from our repertoire, greatly contributing to the sound and social mix of the chorus. We are still searching for a new Musical Director after our previous director left at the start of the first Covid lockdown, but our LLO, Viv Garner, has been a great help to us, travelling once a month to direct. We have recently been in discussions with a couple of possible directors though, so things are looking up!

Leanne is one of our newer members, having joined the chorus in September. Leanne has a range of conditions which have confined her to a wheelchair for the past twenty years, and which impact her sight, breathing, and memory. We are still experimenting with the best way to help Leanne to see and learn the songs, but having all the teach tracks on the website is a great help, and she is provided with words in large type. Leanne is experimenting with enlarging the sheet music on her iPad, too. Leanne has also noticed a significant improvement since joining the chorus in her ability to control her breathing.

Rejoice recently becoming Leanne's nurse is a great bonus too, as she not only comes to rehearsals with Leanne but is also very keen to practise with her during the week. James also has a great interest in singing and drives them both to rehearsals. Leanne herself loves being part of the chorus, both from a social point of view, and also because she loves



Viv, James, Leanne, and Rejoice

singing. She hasn't missed a rehearsal since joining! Our chorus, like many, is mixed, and we have members with mobility and dementia issues, but we all value the power of singing together. Long may it continue!

**Deana Foot, Chair
Singchronicity**

Sister Act

Harmony College in Nottingham was an amazing success, and I particularly enjoyed practising and performing *Sister Act*.

This song has a very special place in my heart as the words are very relevant for me. I first heard it at Convention when the amazing Avalon quartet sang it. Convention was very difficult for me as my sister, Joanne - who years previously had encouraged me to join our chorus, Velvet Harmony - was not able to attend because she was at home and very sick. I had thought of my sister throughout Convention weekend, and when I heard the words and the beautiful arrangement by Sam Hubbard I just sat and sobbed.

I was delighted when Natalie, a member of Velvet Harmony and the then Chair of LABBS, told me we would be singing the song at Harmony College, and we both encouraged our members to attend. You can imagine just how special it was for me to sing

that song at Harmony College, with my sister and 16 other members of our chorus, along with LABBS members. Before our performance, I was also able to talk a little about what this song means to me, which you can watch [here](#).

Our chorus is a small group of ladies with very different ages and life experiences, but we are all supportive of each other - just like sisters. Throughout the weekend we all made new friends and appreciated the helpful, encouraging, and caring atmosphere that had been created by LABBS. Not only did we feel that we had learnt a great deal, but we also really enjoyed ourselves. We would like to send our thanks to everyone involved in making the weekend such a great success.

**Diane Carrington
Velvet Harmony**



Joanne and Diane



Velvet Harmony at Harmony College

Spinnaker's been busy!

We recently held our AGM

and said thank you/happy retirement to three long serving board members: Tracey B (Bookings), Tracy D (PRO) and Elspeth (Membership). They all did an amazing job, and we will be forever grateful to them for giving up their valuable time and energy to these roles, for the good of the chorus.

We've had an awesome retreat weekend with the very talented Sandra Lea-Riley as our Performance Coach, and Tony Riley came along too! This year we were lucky enough to have eight new members on the risers and 12



LABBS Vice Chair, Jill Cook, Spinnaker MD, John Palmer, LLO, Jacqui Edwards

members of the chorus who had never been to a Spinnaker retreat before! Here's what some of them had to say:

'I thought it was great fun! I didn't quite know what to expect, but I learnt a lot, and learnt whilst having fun! It was great having outside coaches to help us and give us some ideas. The venue was perfect, food was fantastic, and the company was even better!' - Jane

'I loved it! It was amazing to spend a whole weekend singing and learning about technique and performance from experts. I enjoyed having time to get to know members of the chorus better and certainly pushed myself out of my comfort zone by performing in the evening skits. Roll on next year!' – Liz R

'It was a fabulous experience! We learnt so much and laughed along the way! I want to do it all again!' – Ciara

'It was a valuable experience. It was a massive opportunity to learn all the



Spinnaker Retreat with Sandra Lea-Riley and Tony Riley (Photo credit: Ron Hobden)

different aspects of barbershop singing and performing, from experienced and knowledgeable coaches. I was made to feel very welcome. The venue was perfect, and the food was delicious. Looking forward to next year.' – Loo

Spinnaker also celebrated with Jacqui Edwards, LABBS Liaison Officer, when she received her 40-year LABBS Membership pin and certificate, and with our own Chairperson, Jill Cook, when she became the Vice-Chair of LABBS. Congratulations Ladies!

**Liz Waddon, PRO
Spinnaker Chorus**

Wedding Belles for The Belles of Three Spires

The Belles of Three Spires had a wonderful, happy,

event in April. Our Musical Director, Lucy Belle, married Alec Whitwell. The weather was absolutely beautiful and the sun shone all day. The venue was perfect, and Lucy was a stunning bride in an art nouveau styled wedding dress with her beau in a pale pink suit and waistcoat. Their children made pretty bridesmaids and a bridesman, and lead Chesca was Maid of Honour.



Lucy and Alec

Lucy involved the choir in her evening speech by singing *Tightrope*, from *The Greatest Showman*. The song was a

metaphor for the juggling act she has to do with family, directing, and work. Lucy initially started singing the song solo, and then Chesca, Holly, and Beth from her quartet, Tempest, joined the singing, followed by choruses sung by choir members attending the wedding.

Other news this spring is that we have our new songs for Convention. We are very excited and are looking forward to October! We have also been getting some major coaching tips from Liz Garnett, who has arranged our ballad. Neil Firth, Emma Shanks, and Alex de Bruin have contributed training sessions too, and we are enjoying learning tips and tricks to improve our performance and singing.

We also held our annual awards, and long service certificates were handed out.

We are looking forward to our annual dinner this May at Christ the King hall in Coventry, and have a full evening planned with entertainment and a buffet meal.



New Belles, Eve and Hannah, with Lucy Belle Whitwell, and our new Chair, Holly Dawes (R)

Unfortunately, our Chairman, Sue Seddon, has stepped down. We thank her for her tireless dedication to our choir, and her expert work through the years. We have been very lucky to have another new Chairman voted and seconded in, Holly Willoughby.

**Linda Nicholson, PRO
The Belles of Three Spires**

Summer's coming!

It seems nature is still playing hide and seek with spring, but with the little matter of a Coronation approaching (at the time of writing!), we can only hope that summer is on the way.

Our lovely baritone, Linda Walters, celebrated 25 years with the Red Rosettes this month and was presented with her certificate by Emma McManus, our MD. Congratulations, Linda!



The Red Rosettes at St George's church

Our favourite singout this year so far was at the beautiful St George's church in the middle of Preston. It is known as the Hidden Gem as it is hidden away in the city centre, and people walk past without realising it is there. Pop in if you are ever in Preston. It is stunning.

The congregation provide food for the homeless and even their dogs get fed. The smell of hotpot and apple pie was delicious. It is a wonderful support for the homeless community who expressed their appreciation, and we were happy to donate our fee to this worthy cause.

We also presented our local Baby Beat Charity for Premature babies with a cheque for £200 raised at chorus singouts.

We were honoured to welcome the new LABBS Chair, Sue Ranson, on her first chorus visit since taking office.

A large group of Red Rosettes



Linda and Emma

sneaked over the border into Yorkshire to attend the concert by the White Rosettes to raise funds for the road to international. A wonderful evening of barbershop performed by our UK reps going to compete in the USA. Good luck to you all!

Enjoy the Summer everyone.

Life's a song, we sing it.

Ann Atkin
The Red Rosettes

Are you a woofers or a tweeter?

This, and many other questions were answered in our recent coaching day with the amazing Helen Lappert!

It was the first time we'd been on the risers for a whole day since before Convention; a test of endurance for many, especially our lovely newbies! 13 intrepid ladies attended our four-week *Love to Sing* course in February. They learned *A Thousand Years* and were introduced to one of our competition songs. (If I told you what it is, I'd have to kill you!)

We are delighted to welcome Madge (tenor), Victoria (bass), and Yvonne, Huda and Liz (leads) to the Welwyn Harmony family. Several other ladies have also shown interest in joining, so we are hopeful for more new members. It was really encouraging seeing so many people on the risers enjoying themselves and making an awesome sound.

The Watford Festival of Music and Drama provided a great opportunity to get competition practice in front of

new audiences. We came away with a Distinction for the chorus and also First Place with Distinction for newly-formed chorus quartet, Dams'n Jam - Linda, Linda, Jill and Rosemary, we couldn't be more proud of you! Wishing you all the very best for LABBS Prelims in June.

One of the other competitors sang a mixed arrangement of *Anthem*, so what better way to end the day but with a mass sing together!

Julie Jones, PRO Team
Welwyn Harmony



Coaching Day with Helen Lappert



Dams'n Jam



Welwyn Harmony at The Watford Festival of Music and Drama

Vectis A Capella AKA Wight Satin

The Garden Isle Ladies Barbershop Harmony Club

Back in 1987, on the 30th November, Wight Satin was formed by Stuart Sides, assisted by his sister Beth (now Brimmicombe). Both Stuart and Beth were still at school, and we used the school hall for our rehearsals. After learning the required songs, Marilyn Penketh came over to see us and recommended that we joined LABBS, which we did in 1988.

We were blown away when we went to our first Convention, which was in Harrogate. A great time was had by all! Stuart took us to our first competition, and we were happy with the result the next year when we won the Novice Award for the chorus, and boy, did we party that night!

Around 1990, Family Ties quartet was formed with Anita, Beth, Miriam and Chris, and we won two Silver medals followed by the Gold Medal in 1993. We had a ball! Other quartets were Harlequin, Stepping Out, Root Ginger, and Island Edition.

Pat Darby was our Chair for many years, and for 10 years was part of the C&J

Team. She loved giving out the medals to the quartet champions.

Beth took over the chorus, and got us to competition, and when Beth left the island, her mum, Anita, took over. Chris and Alan Sloper took over from Anita, then the lovely Nick Frampton took us until he became ill and sadly passed away. Our most recent MD was Jacqui Morris who is also very talented.



Vectis A Cappella

We have had some great times together as a chorus, singing at some fab events such as Osbourne House for their Christmas extravaganza for the Ellen McCarthy Trust, and we even sang for Prince Philip at Northwood House in Cowes. We sang for lots of charities too, and nursing and care homes.

Sadly, due to Covid, our numbers dwindled and although we tried to keep in touch via Zoom meetings and quizzes, we struggled as many other choruses did. But, as we hadn't met for rehearsals, we felt that it was the right time to start recruiting. We had had such a long break though, and it was like starting all over again. It was very disheartening. We had offers of support from many LABBS members including Natalie Feddon, Jill Cook, and Rosamunde Pope, and we thank you all.

At our AGM in January, we decided that the only thing we could do was fold the chorus. It was a very sad day indeed, but we have remained great friends and keep in touch. Some of us have joined the South Island A Cappella Chorus, a mixed chorus with the men's Wight Harmony Chorus.

We still all intend to be LABBS Club at Large Members, and some of us are going up to Harrogate this year.

On a final note, we would like to thank all the coaches and people who have helped us along the way.

Yours always in harmony

**Chris Sloper, Chairman
Vectis A Capella**

Thank you!

Crystal Chords want to extend a massive thank you to all the faculty and volunteers who helped make Harmony College 2023 the best one yet!

Within our chorus, we have LABBS Events Director, Kristina Mair, Blue Chorus Bass Section Leader, Anne-Marie Borneuf, riser van driver, Laura Orton, and social media queen, Lara Vaughn. With so many Crystals involved, we have had a small glimpse into the sheer volume of effort, dedication, and hard

work that goes into running an event of this size. Thank you to everyone who gave up their time, knowledge, and experience to make it special. Particularly thanks to Debi Cox, Dean of Harmony College 2023, for pulling off a magnificent event. The rousing chorus of *For She's a Jolly Good Fellow* (complete with improvised harmony of course!), was a weekend highlight for this PRO!

**Laura Orton, PRO
Crystal Chords**



Blue Chorus Bass Section Leader, Anne-Marie, sandwiched between receptionists, Ruth and Theresa



Social media queen, Lara, with M&C Director, Mel

Singing around in 2023

With my dear Dad passing in 2021

and then my hubby taking early retirement in May 2022, it felt like the planets were aligned for us to reach a goal we'd only ever talked about - taking a year out to travel around the UK. We purchased our caravan, 'Freedom Freddie' (named after my dear Dad), and set to work planning our gap year: Grand Tour 2023.

Having sung lead with Harmony InSpires, Oxford, for the last 11 years, I knew it was going to be a big deal for me, not only missing my wonderful HI friends, but also missing my weekly shot of singing with my chorus. Singing in the car on my own every Wednesday evening doesn't really have the same impact! My friend, Clare, suggested I look up other choruses whilst away.

Great idea, I thought!

We set off - me, the hubster and our dog Ollie - on Sunday 1st January, heading for Weymouth. At the time of writing, I have had the absolute pleasure of meeting the wonderful ladies at Red Rock Harmony in Teignmouth, GraceNotes Acapella in Saltash, and Celtic Chords in Truro. I've received a very warm welcome at each chorus and enjoyed joining in with songs where I could. I'm hoping to visit as many choruses as I can over the year, so I'm keeping my eyes (and ears) open while on my travels, and hopefully,

if I can, I'll be visiting your chorus very soon!

Shelly Poynter
Harmony InSpires



The hubster, me, and Ollie

A reflection from Abbey Belles Chorus

If you are reading this you already love singing,

you probably know that it's good for you, and you may have read the science about breathing, socialising, mental stimulation, etc, but have you looked at your own chorus recently? We did.

Speaking to our MD about why people joined our chorus, she noted that many were going through 'Funny Transitions'. Bereavement, difficult relationships, or needing a new life direction and focus feature large. So, we thought we understood why they joined. We wanted to understand why they stay.

Some context is relevant and on the day of our survey one Belle had just completed the Three Peaks Challenge - her feet bore testament, but you don't need the photograph! Another was on crutches after a recent total knee replacement. A third had a nasty shoulder injury. Quite a few have long term health conditions. Some were returning after family emergencies like a partner's ill health, or very early babies, and lots of mums were coping with jobs and the school holidays. Our age range is 24-84.

We did a quick survey, asking members to note down how they felt as they entered the rehearsal. Single word responses were common, and in true songster style our Belles didn't hold back, with comments like, 'Do I

really want to go?', 'Rushed', 'Frazzled', 'Apprehensive', 'Stressed', 'Tired'.

One of our Belles wrote 'Murderous'. WHAT? All was explained when we learned that her husband had just trapped her hand in the car seat!



Abbey Belles Chorus

Most knew there were benefits to be had by attending: 'Tired but focused to do this', 'Tired, but usually feel better afterwards', 'Like coming home to family', 'Looking forward to it very much', 'Getting ready for fun and stimulation', 'Keen to sing'. Quite noticeable was one member who spoke to everyone who had been absent or poorly; it's not a formal role, that's just how she is.

We repeated the exercise as members left for home, and the notes read: 'Buzzing', 'Empowered', 'Exhilarated', 'Had a great laugh as per usual', 'Great - so pleased I came', 'Fantastic', 'Excited, fabulous, calm and happy', 'Relaxed

and happier - forgotten why I was stressed'. And the comments went on: 'Freedom from care of the world', 'Tired and grateful for the distraction', 'Singing, stimulation, and fellowship', 'I felt like I'd had a group hug'. And finally, 'Concentrated so hard tonight that I've forgotten everything that I was feeling scared about'.

So having completed our in-depth qualitative research project (well, we think it was!), these were our conclusions:

Singing in a group combats adult loneliness and isolation. Improvement in focus is reflected in the discipline of preparation and getting ready to go out. We benefit from the physical health aspects of breathing correctly and with good posture, and through socialising and getting out of the house. We gain from the mental stimulation, challenge, and brain training of learning to click, stomp and clap, while using facial expression, and singing the right notes, in the right order, and at the right time WITHOUT MUSIC! And for many, this is a welcome distraction and respite from health, family, and work concerns and worries.

So, take another look at your singing sisters: your group may not be trophy-toting troubadours, but you are doing a fabulous job.

Gillian Swan, PRO
Abbey Belles Chorus

Supporting mental health needs

A number of choruses have been in touch with Board members and asked how they might support the mental health needs of their members. With that in mind, we've put together some ideas and things to think about which you can read below. However, we would advise members to be cautious when offering advice or support, and to ensure they are also prioritising their own wellbeing.

Often, the first indication that something is troubling a member is a change in their behaviour. Perhaps you've noticed they don't seem themselves, or they're behaving a little differently. Maybe they're more withdrawn or less bubbly than usual. Perhaps you've noticed them acting inappropriately or they seem to have far more energy than they would usually have. Sometimes though, changes can be quite subtle, or a person might hide their feelings. Building good relationships with your singing buddies can help you to spot changes and fosters trust, which is key if you are to offer support.

If you do think someone is struggling, simply asking if they're OK can often be enough to let them know they're valued, and give them the opportunity to talk. If so, find a quiet place to have a chat and let your buddy tell you only as much as they feel comfortable with. Perhaps, if you're unable to chat at rehearsal, you could send them a message to check in. If your buddy wants to talk, it's important to listen to how they're feeling, and to keep what they tell you confidential. If you feel able to offer more than a listening ear, consider asking if there's anything you can do to help or support them. That might mean making a point of checking in with them immediately before and after rehearsal, or perhaps, if they feel their mental health is affecting their ability to fully participate in your group's activities, going with them when they speak to your Chair or MD. Everyone is different though, so it's important to ask the person what kind of help or support they feel would be best for them.

Encouraging communication and creating a safe, inclusive space for everyone, no matter how they are feeling, is important. Perhaps, as a Chair, MD, or Music Team member, you might consider dedicating some time to regularly speak with all your members to ask how they're doing. Maybe you could appoint a Mental Health Champion who can look out for your members, be there should they need a chat or some support, and if needed, act as a liaison with your committee. Sometimes a member might need to take time off from chorus, so reassurance that there is no pressure for them to attend can go a long way. Making time for social events and group activities can be useful too, and really help to build and strengthen relationships, which in turn can make it easier for your singers to reach out if they aren't feeling great.

There are lots of ways to promote good mental health in your group. Perhaps at your next retreat, AGM or other gathering, you could take some time to discuss this with your members and ask them for their ideas. Working together as a team can be empowering and can help members to recognise that they belong to an inclusive group which strives to create a positive environment, where everyone is welcomed and supported.

It's important to remember, however, that while we often have close relationships with members of our choruses, we are not responsible for each other's mental health needs, and often the best course of action is for the affected person to seek advice from their GP or other healthcare professional.

Finally, if the mental health needs of a chorus member are causing concern and you're unsure what approach to take, please contact an [LLO](#) or Board member for advice.

Further help and support:

Samaritans. Whatever you're going through, you can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 (free from any phone), email jo@samaritans.org, or visit a branch in person. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day). For more information, visit www.samaritans.org.

Mind. If you are looking for information about mental health conditions, helplines, where to get support, how to provide support, and a whole host of other mental health topics, visit www.mind.org.uk. Mind's Infoline is an information and signposting service which is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays). You can call Infoline on 0300 123 3393.

CALM. The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) aims to prevent suicide, and can offer practical suggestions for many of life's problems. Their helpline and webchat are open from 5pm to midnight, 365 days a year. Call 0800 585858 or visit www.thecalmzone.net.

Relaxing, fun, and a great mood-booster

After an unforgettable few years with the Covid pandemic, and losing our Musical Director Marilyn Penketh, The Pitchpipers have strived to keep the chorus going strong. We came back fighting, and after the long break we started our singing courses again. As a result, we recently welcomed two new members, Sammy and Kat.

Sammy is the Service Manager for a domestic abuse charity, managing five refuges for women across Hampshire. She also supports staff who work with the clients. Kat is the Deputy Service Manager for the same charity and works directly with clients, dealing with the effects of domestic abuse, with those who don't need refuge but require help with police reports, emotional support, and guidance.

Sammy and Kat discovered The Pitchpipers after seeing an advert for a *Love to Sing* course. It was Sammy's idea to join the chorus as both ladies are trying to have lots of adventures and make special memories before they both turned 40 in May this year.

Sammy said, 'Bearing in mind the job we both do, the challenges we face, and the different people

we help, joining the chorus, and singing, clears the mind. It gives you time and space to forget the emotions and stresses of work and home life as it's an escape, and The Pitchpipers are very welcoming and supportive'.

Kat added, 'The Pitchpipers is like a giant family. Everyone is nice to everyone, and the ladies are always welcoming when we walk through the door on a Tuesday evening'. She said she would recommend a singing course to anyone, particularly those with a stressful or challenging job: 'It makes me feel

energised and leaves me buzzing when I go home after rehearsal. Singing is definitely a mood-booster, and is great for unwinding and having time for yourself.'

Sammy and Kat both joined The Pitchpipers after the singing course, and particularly enjoyed Christmas singouts which they say were jolly and fun. They really liked the dance moves in some of the songs, and that everyone had a great sense of humour. They both agreed singing is relaxing, fun, and a bit like meditation!

**Louise Berry, PRO
The Pitchpipers**



Kat and Sammy

My music medicine

I have Bipolar. It takes a lot of courage to say that, so I generally don't; there is still far too much stigma surrounding mental health, and a lot of misunderstanding about conditions like the one I live with.

I've had this diagnosis for about 20 years, and although I have learned to manage it and live with it, it does still bite me on the behind from time to time! One of the things I've learned to do though, is recognize when my mood shifts. Although mania can be far harder to control and there isn't much I can do about a major 'up' episode, often, if I catch a depressive episode early enough, I can take steps to stop it escalating out of control. That's where chorus comes in!

I have lost count of the number of times I really haven't wanted to go to rehearsal or a singout because I'm feeling low. I

know though, that so often, chorus has helped prevent me from sliding down even further, and so I go. Once I'm there and have been on the risers for a song or two, I can feel my mood start to improve. Singing, and losing myself in the music, has such a powerful, uplifting effect on me. There's an energy that comes from singing in a group which is so hard to describe or define, but I'm sure many barbershoppers will have experienced it and know exactly what I mean. That energy is like a medicine for me, and I always go home feeling better than when I arrived.

I've seen, as I'm sure others have, the many articles, quotes, videos, etc, which all proclaim the special and unique benefits of group singing and the positive impact it has on our mental well-being. There are sciency reasons aplenty to be found on Google, but being a fairly critical, analytic person,

I do sometimes wonder if said sciency reasons would stand up to thorough, objective evaluation. Does what we do really bring benefits in a way that no other activity can? But then, does it matter if it's proven, indisputable scientific fact, or not? Not really, because for me, and many others, something positive *is* happening. I know without a shadow of a doubt that singing with my chorus is beneficial to my mental health, and so, sciency reasons or not, I will keep doing it. It is one of the most important, useful tools I have in my mental health toolbox, and I'd honestly be lost without it.

If you'd like to understand more about Bipolar, you can visit Mind's information page [here](#).

LABBS Chorus Member

Pat Darby, 1940 - 2023

I am deeply saddened to say, that after suffering ill health for quite a while, Pat passed away on the 21st April 2023.

Wight Satin was formed in 1987 and became members of LABBS in 1989, and Pat was one of the original members of the chorus. Pat had held the position of Chairman, apart from a period of 10 years when she played an active role in the LABBS Contest & Administration Team under Marilyn Penketh's guidance. As well as helping with contest administration, part of Pat's role was looking after the contest videos and the much-coveted medals at her home on the Island. Pat was often seen on stage handing the quartet medals to the LABBS Chair to present to the winning quartets, which she loved doing.

Pat attended all the LABBS and BABS Conventions up until the last five years, due to Covid and ill health. Even though Pat wasn't well enough to go out, she still attended the LABBS Zoom meetings and watched all the Convention performances on YouTube.

Pat had many barbershop friends both nationwide and abroad, who I know will be sad to hear the news of her passing, but we will all have fond memories of her in our own way.

We will miss you, Pat!

In Harmony

**Chris Sloper, Chairman
Vectis A Capella (Wight Satin)**



Wendy Capper, 1937 - 2023

Crystal Chords are saddened to say that Wendy Capper died in April 2023.

Those of us who remember Wendy know her as someone who was a big part of chorus life for many years and who always had a smile, a sense of humour and a love of Crystal Chords that shone through.

During her time in chorus, Wendy also served as our Chair,

our Council Rep and was on our wardrobe team. She sang in Coast to Coast for many years too. Wendy was a special lady who remained a huge supporter and cheerleader for Crystals long after she stopped singing with us.

Wendy is loved and is greatly missed.

**Laura Orton, PRO
Crystal Chords**



Bess Worsley, Caroline Poole, Wendy Capper and Nancy Philbin. Wendy LOVED Betty's Tearoom in Harrogate and always found time for a trip!



Wendy Capper, Anne-Marie Borneuf, a bemused boat driver, Alison Liddell, and Kathy Szeputi in 2010, on a chorus canal boat trip during the Sale Music Festival

DIANE BAKER, 1962–2023

It is hard to describe in a few words the big personality that was Diane Baker. If you asked her to describe herself, she would talk your ear off for hours with all the tales of things that had happened in her life. She was never one to shy away like a wallflower and was always putting herself into the action.

She loved barbershop and adored singing with Second City Sound. She would tell anyone who would listen about the chorus, and she was always on a recruiting mission. She dreamed of wearing a gold medal and was confident it would happen one day. I know for sure she is

living that dream in heaven with all the great barbershoppers that have gone before her, and I'm pretty sure she would be as insistent on singing with all of them as she was in life.

She will be sorely missed by our chorus because she always had a smile on her face, no matter what was going on in her life, and she always had time for everyone.

Like she shouted across the stage in the part she played in our LABBS Toy Story set, 'To Infinity and Beyond!'. Until we meet again.

Katie Danter
Second City Sound



Eileen (Rosie) Lockett, 1934 - 2023

Rosie Lockett sadly passed away on 14th January 2023 and a requiem mass took place at St Joseph's RC Church, Stockport on 6th February 2023.

All who knew Rosie would agree she was a larger-than-life character. She was among the original group who formed The Cheshire Chord Company in the early 90s, having been a member of The Liberty Belles in earlier years. Together with her lifelong friends Ann Lowing, Brenda Lomax and Jean Thomas, with Rosie singing the lead, they formed Quadrophonic, who went on to win the coveted LABBS Quartet Gold in 1985.

Besides her love of barbershop, and many accolades, Rosie will be remembered for her wit and wicked sense of humour, not to mention her distinctive whistle...



Rosie Lockett



Quadrophonic in 1985: Jean Thomas, Ann Lowing, Rosie Lockett, and Brenda Lomax

As was her wish, at the gathering following the funeral, some of her barbershop friends sang in her honour. To quote LABBS past Chair, Kath Good, 'Rosie's funeral was a sad but wonderful occasion, filled with love, laughter and song. She would have loved it. She was one of a kind and will live on forever in our hearts'.

Rest in peace dear Rosie, even if I'm sure you'd rather just have one heck of a heavenly afterglow.

Monica Funnell
LABBS QC

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Convention 2023 IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

NEW! EARLIER START!

Friday 27th October - Quartet semi-finals

To enable LABBS to fully integrate the mixed quartet semi-finalists into the quartet competition, please note the following timings:

9.45am - Welcome speech

10.00am - Quartet semi-finals