

Voice Box

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

Summer 2022 £4



Belles Tropicana, Storm Eunice, and Deke!



In This Edition
Education, LABBS and beyond, and more!

**Ladies Association of
British Barbershop Singers**

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Hello and welcome to the Summer edition of VoiceBox

I am so glad to see the weather is changing, and in turn bringing new possibilities for us all to take part in sing-outs around the country. Covid is still around us, but I have been seeing first-hand how clubs are all embracing being together again, and in many cases, starting to practice their repertoire for Convention.

At our AGM in March, our Immediate Past Chair, Nancy Philbin, stepped down from the Board. It's hard to believe that over a year has passed since I became Chair, but during this time, and indeed before it in my role as Vice Chair, Nancy has been a constant source of support and guidance to me personally, and to the Board as a whole. She will continue her role as a LABBS Liaison Officer and has taken on the role of Convention Registrations

Manager, but I would like to thank her on behalf of the Association for all that she did during her time on the Board, and to welcome her as an honorary member of LABBS.

Back in April, I visited Amersham Acapella and Crystal Chords as both clubs completed their final rehearsals before they headed off to Sweden to represent LABBS in the European Barbershop Convention. Joining them in Sweden were quartets Avalon and Venus Effect, and mixed quartets, Scandal and Hashtag.

We had some wonderful ambassadors for LABBS at EBC, and I wished them every success as they competed in their first major convention post-Covid. You can find out more about how they got on on page 9.



My favourite part of being Chair of LABBS has to be meeting all of you. I currently have plans to see Arun Acapella, Chorus Icen, Rhapsody, Harmony InSpires, More Harmony and River City Chorus. If I haven't been to your chorus yet, please invite me - I would love to meet you.

Until then, keep singing!

**Natalie Feddon,
LABBS Chair**

CONVENTION UPDATE – UK COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE

Quartets and choruses performing at Convention must submit their copyright-compliant songsheets in early autumn.

UK copyright compliance will be checked by LABBS, so please ensure your sheet music is legal *before* submission. You can find more information about ensuring you have the right licence on the [Copyright Guidance](#) page of our website.

Deadline for next edition: Friday 29th July 2022

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 or websites will usually be less than 1MB.

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

2022 Deadlines: Friday 29th July, Friday 4th November.

Sharing your news

When reading your submissions for this edition,

it struck me that there's been an unexpected but very positive benefit to becoming your editor: I get to 'meet' and chat to so many of you on email every few months, and it's been wonderful getting to know regular contributors.

I've noticed too, that many clubs have had their AGMs since I worked on the Spring edition, and so it's been lovely to 'meet' some newly appointed PROs while putting this Summer edition together. Whether you're new to the role or a seasoned PRO, don't forget that I'm always on hand if you want any help or advice on contributing to VoiceBox – just drop me an email at voicebox@labbs.org.uk.

Like me, VoiceBox readers really enjoy learning about what clubs and quartets have been up to, but I understand that it's not always easy to know how to go about writing, photographing and submitting your news. With that in mind, I had great fun earlier in the year making some short guidance videos with Emma and Lesley from More Harmony. They're packed with hints and tips on how to create fantastic articles and photos, so do check them out on the LABBS YouTube Channel - [Intro](#), [Content](#), [Photos](#), and [Writing](#).

The next edition of VoiceBox will be the last one before Convention (which is SO exciting!), so expect it to be jam-packed with the buzz of JUBILATION! The copy deadline for that edition is Friday 29th July, and as ever, please keep your articles under 350 words, and your photos above

IMB (more on that in the videos!).

I'm so looking forward to hearing what you've been up to so far this year, so please do keep sharing your news with VoiceBox!

Mel Baber, VoiceBox Editor



LABBS AGM update

So, what exactly happens at the AGM?

In common with all charities,

LABBS holds an annual general meeting (AGM), and the 46th Annual General Meeting of LABBS took place this year on 26th March. The format is formal as there is set business to go through every year, and it gives an overview of all the events of the previous year.

The AGM is usually held in person, but this year was a virtual meeting due to the rump of the Covid pandemic. It is attended by all Board members, LABBS Liaison Officers (LLOs) and by two representatives of each club. This year 40 clubs managed to attend, 10 LLOs, and all Board members. It is a big meeting!

After the standard apologies for absence and acceptance of last year's minutes, our Chair gives her overview of the past year and thanks all the people who have made various events and developments possible. Of course, this year we have had a new website and an 'Unconventional Convention', but there has also been a lot of progress towards the goals of our five-year strategy and continuing collaboration with the other UK barbershop organisations. Attendees have the opportunity to ask questions and then we move to the reports from all other Board members. These are circulated beforehand in writing so they are not read out, but after each one is received, club representatives have the opportunity to comment or ask questions.

When all the reports have been received the Chair reads out the current Board roles list. This sets out the names of each Board member and their role, how many years they have served, how many years they still have to go in their current term, and the number of times it is possible for them to be re-elected. As you will appreciate, this is quite a dry item, however, this year we were saying good-bye and thank you to Nancy Philbin who completed her year as Past Chair, and also to Alison Zdzylowski who has served four years as Education Director.

Continuing with the make-up of the Board for 2022-2023, the next item is the election of any new Board members, and we welcomed Alison Thompson as the new Education Director. It is very helpful to the absent-minded members of the Board to have someone coming into the role with the same name, so welcome Alison! This year two new Board roles were formally established as three-year terms, putting the Youth Director and Diversity & Inclusion Director roles on the same footing as other Board roles.

This concluded the business of the meeting but before the meeting closed, the date of the next AGM was announced. In 2023 this will be on 25th March. The AGM is followed by a council meeting with all the same attendees. One way of looking at this is that the AGM looks back at the previous year and then the Council looks forward to the next year.

The minutes of the AGM and the Council, along with all the associated documents such as the Board reports, can be found in the members area of the website, on the [LABBS - Meeting Minutes](#) page. These are for members only, so please do not share them outside the association.

I hope that gives you a little insight into the technical meeting that is the LABBS AGM and I recommend the minutes page of the website for you to see summarised minutes of the Board meetings, as well as the AGM and Council minutes.

Sue Ranson, Vice Chair



Mamma Mia, here Amersham go again!

Like other choruses, we've felt that Covid has left us wanting. So, with 2022 being our 40th Anniversary Year, we were doubly determined to get back on track, starting with the European Barbershop Convention in Sweden - the land of archipelagos, the Aurora and, of course, ABBA!

Obviously, we knew it'd be tough to go from nearly zero to hopeful heroes in just a few months, but how could we resist the challenge?

We started easing our way into an insanely good, new competition ballad last summer. Then once we'd turned the Christmas corner, it was a case of getting our game faces on and putting in some serious work.

We got back on the risers and kicked off our new rehearsal regime with early starts plus super-short tea breaks (but no shortage of cake, thanks to our talented Tina!). There were mirror rehearsals in a dance studio to bring out our inner Dancing Queens, late afterglow-style sessions to encourage us to ring, ring those chords, coaching sessions from the amazing Liz Garnett and Rob Mance. And of course, our usual epic, pre-competition, all-day rehearsal topped off with a confidence-



Amersham A Cappella's all-day rehearsal

boosting Friends and Family concert.

Not that it was all about competing. We still took time out to do other stuff we love. Like fine-tuning one of our favourite repertoire songs (the Stevie Wonder hit 'As') with its super-talented arranger, Steve Arnott. Or secretly scheming behind the scenes to make our 40th Anniversary Events Amershamly-Fabulous.

And naturally, we wanted to celebrate the achievements of our very own Fantastic Four: Doris Baker, Anne Jones, Lynne Owen and Lesley Dell who were presented with Long Service pins by LABBS roving Chair, Natalie Feddon, at a special Awards Night. You can read their stories on page 23 and 24.

Of course, with this VoiceBox copy deadline being just days before we compete, we can't tell you how well our hard work paid off. But, we can say that once we get back up on stage to perform, Mamma Mia it'll show again, just how much we've missed this!

**Hils Apicella, PRO
Amersham A Cappella**

Check out page 9 for an EBC update - Ed.

Education

Introducing your new E&J Chair

Hello everyone, I'm Alison Thompson! I've recently been elected Chair of the Education and Judging Committee, so I thought I'd introduce myself.

I've been a barbershopper since December 1995, when I went along to a concert given by Norwich Harmony at the local Townswomen's Guild. I loved it, and in the interval one of the members came up to me and said, 'You looked like you were enjoying yourself, do you sing?'. The rest, as they say, is history!

I started singing baritone and before long took on the role of assistant MD. Then, in 2001, I was encouraged by Annie Leathers, who was MD, to take over from her. I did, and it's a role I still hold and love.

In 2007, I began training as a LABBS Singing Judge, certifying in 2010. I have been honoured to judge in the UK for LABBS and BABS, but also in Holland,

Spain, Ireland, Canada, and the USA. I've served as Singing Category Director, and most recently as Education Officer. I now take the Education Director reins from Alison Zdzykowski who had the difficult task of steering us through the pandemic, and before her Debi Cox, who is mainly responsible for devising the rolling Education Programme we all benefit from, and devising the successful quartet coaching model that we use.

Our judges are looking forward to getting back to judging in person. Throughout lockdown we met for seminars twice a year, and at other times for extra practice. We put together the e-online learning programme, contributed sessions to LABBS Big Weekend, and many of us 'visited' other chorus rehearsals. In my tenure as Chair, we'll be looking at the way we recruit trainee judges to ensure our training programme is clear, transparent and running well.

We are your judges, here to help and

support all members of LABBS. Have a look at the [Judging pages on the website](#) where you'll find information on the categories, the contest rules, the E&J handbook, and information on category personnel. Please do get in touch if you have questions or if we can help in any way - eandjchair@labbs.org.uk



Serving on the Board is a huge honour, and I am delighted to be a member of such an awesome team.

Alison Thompson, E&J Chair

Education in 2022 and beyond

We have already had the Directors' Day, planned and facilitated by Liz Garnett and her faculty of Sally McLean, Helen Lappert, Monica Funnell, Debi Cox and Craig Kehoe. This was for a small cohort of Directors and Assistant Directors from LABBS and BABS who learned from both discussion-led and practical classes. You can read more about the day below.

We also had our Music Category Day on Saturday 21st May, led by Music Category Director Debi Cox and her team, and aimed at Directors, Music Teams and Quartet singers. You can read more about this on page 6.

At the end of June we are back to our first in-person contest

– Quartet Prelims. The contest will be on 25th with a full day of coaching on Sunday 26th. Quartets will be paired with another that achieved a similar score in the contest. The pairs will have coaching sessions with a judge from each category.

There are already plans afoot for next year's Harmony College. We will publish details as soon as they are confirmed.

We also plan to have events in the programme that are of interest for all members. If you have any suggestions, please email - eandjchair@labbs.org.uk

Alison Thompson, E&J Chair

In-person education returns

On March 5th, LABBS held its first in-person education day in two years with a Directors' Education Day. We had MDs and Asst. MDs (and a few music team members), from various LABBS choruses and other organisations, ranging from two Champion Chorus MDs to some of the smallest and newest LABBS clubs. It wasn't a huge number of attendees as many MDs had retreats, competitions, or other events already planned, but in the end, I think the number was just perfect.

Over the course of the day, the ever-amazing Dr Liz Garnett led an equally amazing team of leaders, helping us to recognise that we are going through a recovery process, where we are in that process, and identifying what's next. The day started with a full group session on the Conductor-Choir Bond, highlighting how choruses react to the director in what they are doing and how they are doing it - which included a Spiderman quote 'With great power comes great responsibility' - I don't think it was attributed but it certainly made me smile.

We had a number of sessions to choose between and my first was Recovering Skills with Craig Kehoe. It was a really useful, thought-provoking discussion looking at pre, during, and post-Covid skills (members of the LABBS Directors' Cafe on Facebook can see the post-it photos in the group).

Next up for me was Rebuilding Chorus Identity with Helen Lappert, and we were challenged to look at our position now (mostly with smaller, irregular choruses), as a positive. For example, the members who are still with us are likely to be



the most committed.

Throughout the day, there were also small group sessions to practice directing and the key focus was making sure we understood the importance of knowing what impact our hands have on the chorus sound - it's amazing how many different ways a group can make a 't' sound, just by changing fingers, wrist and arm movement!

Thank you to everyone who gave up their Saturday to take part; it really was a fabulous day although there was a lot of 'Can we hug?' moments. Thanks also to all the leaders for not just leading but also participating - it's always good to hear champion chorus MDs (Sally and Helen) talk about the same concerns and issues that other choruses have. Biggest thanks to Liz who once again gave us just what we needed. Roll

on more LABBS education events, and Harmony College in 2023!

**Donna Whitehouse, MD
Cleeve Harmony**



Music Category Day

In focus this year were the five elements used to score contestants:

Consonance, Execution, Delivery, Theme, and Embellishments.

Consonance was offered by Dr. Alex de Bruin who covered the physics of sound, complete with graphs and real-time sonic analysis. Delegates prompted lively discussions about lock and ring, and tuning unusual chords.

Execution fell to Delyth Knight who explained why producing well-tuned, synchronised singing is more enjoyable for everyone, and will score better. It takes careful, consistent, and regular practice, and Delyth provided simple exercises and tips for planning rehearsals where good execution can be embedded.

Emma Shanks is passionate about **Delivery** and created a few 'light-bulb' moments. She said, "It was lovely that delegates were able to experience elements of delivery for themselves using a tag, and were able to do it straight away." They used what they

already knew, but now have the framework or vocabulary to describe how it works.

Debi Cox helped delegates to understand why **Themes** are important, to ensure a cohesive musical performance. They learned about the different musical themes to consider, and how each would influence interpretative decisions. They then tried applying lyrical, melodic, and rhythmic themes to various songs and experienced what effect each theme had on their performance.

Angela Sanchez covered **Embellishments**, explaining what they are (harmonies, bell chords, swipes, etc), why they might be used, what they contribute to a performance, and how Music Judges assess their delivery. For example, if you are singing an echo, you could just sing it but it's not going to mean anything. Music Judges prefer that it should.

We ended the day not with coaching under glass but judging under glass.

Using a recorded chorus performance, each judge made observations in real time. We had previously judged the performance and agreed an acceptable range of scores, and the observations we made contributed to the evaluation that the contestant would have received.



Delegates said the day had been informative and enjoyable, and we received some great feedback:

"The Music Category was a bit of a mystery to me, so I feel I've learned so much. Much more confident that I could make good choices. Thank you."

"I didn't know how much I didn't know! Now I do."

"A very informative and enjoyable day, delivered by experts! I can't wait to put it all into practice, ready for our first LABBS Competition."

"Incredibly useful sessions – giving us plenty of ideas to take back to our quartet. Thoroughly recommend to anyone thinking about attending future education sessions."

The Music Team agreed that the day was a great success, and our thanks go to everyone who contributed, especially Events Coordinator Faith.

Delyth Knight, LABBS Music Judge



Quartet Corner

LABBS takeover!

With three-quarters of IN HOUSE quartet attending BABS

With three-quarters of IN HOUSE quartet attending BABS at the start of May, normality feels like it has finally returned! How great it feels to be singing in front of an audience again!

At the start of May, we got back on stage and performed in a competition, to an audience at the Alderley Edge Music Festival. It was so good! We were delighted to be placed second overall in the choir and mixed voice category with our song Down with Love, winning the best barbershop song.

Out of 11 competitors, it was great that the top three places went to LABBS choruses and quartets! A special well done to [Affinity Show Choir](#) who placed first, and [Cheshire A Capella](#) who were third. We also want to mention our good friends Four Crying Out Loud, who also sing with Cheshire Chord Company; it was their first time out and what an amazing job they did! We're looking forward to attending prelims with them in June, and we can't wait to see some of you there!

Julie Phillips, IN HOUSE



A busy time for Diversity and Inclusion

There has been a lot of work happening, with Diversity and Inclusion in LABBS over the past few months.

We were very pleased with the response to the demographic survey which went out in February, and we noticed a few key trends which have impacted the direction we are taking with our work, to best support our members. Some of these areas, which we are now focusing on, are:

- Encouraging D&I members within choruses by providing a description for this committee role
- Working to support the significant number of members with disabilities or neurodivergence
- Celebrating the strong LGBTQ+ presence within our membership

The Diversity in Harmony team, made up of representatives from LABBS, BABS and Sweet Adelines Region 31, has also expanded and had a reshuffle of the roles. I will now be taking on the position of Chair, while Barrington Sowden has stepped down to take on the role of Secretary. We are also delighted to welcome Caroline Poole into the team. Caroline brings energy, enthusiasm and practical ideas which can help further propel the work we are already doing.

We've also added an FAQ document to the D&I page on the LABBS website, to help understanding around diversity and inclusion topics. This is a working document which will

continue to be updated, and you can find it on our page here - <https://www.labbs.org.uk/diversity>

If you have any suggestions or questions I could add to the FAQ, please email me at diversity@labbs.org.uk

Natasha Nickson, Diversity and Inclusion Director



Finance

Perfect Polecats



Polecats are one of the joys of barbershop. The ability to meet new people and immediately share a well-known song in harmony is almost magical. The term 'polecat' seems to derive initially from the barber's pole, which is still displayed outside some barber's shops today. The red and white striped pole signifies the blood ensuing from the surgery the barber surgeon could legally perform up until the late 1700s. However, today we don't need to get our teeth pulled to enjoy singing the shared songs we now know as polecats!

As you will have read in a previous edition, the singers of Mersey Harmony have decided to close their club after many harmonious years. They have kindly donated their funds to LABBS to use for purchasing polecats for the whole association to enjoy, and this will provide us with enjoyment for many more harmonious years to come.

Of course, hailing from Liverpool, the Mersey Harmony singers are all very aware of the huge influence of Merseybeat music on the development of their city, and in particular the phenomenon that was The Beatles. The Mersey Beat newspaper held a poll in 1962 to find the most popular Merseybeat band, which was of course topped by the Beatles.

It is no surprise that Mersey Harmony have asked the selection committee to consider a Beatles song for the first polecat to be purchased with the donated funds. They have expressed their preferences for their first choice of song, and we are all excited to see which one the selection committee will choose. Whichever one it is will be a 'fab' addition to our polecat repertoire, and we extend our grateful thanks to Mersey Harmony for the kind donation which will purchase polecats for years to come.

Sue Ranson, Vice Chair

ARUN A CAPPELLA Dresses and Shoes For Sale

Please contact arunacappella@gmail.com with your offers or enquiries. Thank you.



We have 28 of these lovely blue dresses, fully lined with lace top layer. 12 are brand new and 16 have only been worn once.

Originally £35 each, suggesting £10 each or near offer depending on your requirements + postage.

Sizes available:
2 x size 10 (1 new, 1 used), 2 x Size 12 (both new), 5 x Size 14 (2 new, 3 used), 7 x size 16 (1 new, 6 used), 5 x size 18 (1 new, 4 used), 4 x size 20 (3 new, 1 used), 2 x size 22 (both new), 1 x size 24 (used)

Also 19 pairs of silver shoes with block heels as in photo, incl. 1 pair flat (again most are new and some worn just once).

Originally £25 each from Marks & Spencer, suggesting £8 each + postage.

Sizes available:
1x 3, 1x 4½, 2 x 5, 2x 5½, 4x 6, 2x 6½, 2x 7, 3x 7½, 2x 8



Welcome to your Making Music membership

As a member of LABBS you automatically get full membership to [Making Music](http://www.makingmusic.org). To find out how your group can save money, recruit new members, find other groups in your local area, discover new music, or get sector news and updates sent straight to your inbox, take a look at your interactive Welcome Pack: <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/welcome-pack>

You can access dedicated one-to-one support on anything that might be getting in your way of making music, so if there's something

that's taking up too much of your time, then call us on 020 7939 6030 or email us at info@makingmusic.org.uk and we will help you in any way that we can!

Making Music is the UK's largest leisure-time music community offering help, support and guidance for your music group, whenever and wherever you need it.

Alyssia Frankland, Making Music



LABBS and Beyond

A busy spring for barbershop, with still more to come!

Barbershop conventions are really taking off. On the 29th April, I went to Harrogate to watch the BABS convention, and was home for just a day before I then went to Sweden for EBC. In May it was Sweet Adelines Region 31 convention in Warwick, and our own prelims will be held at the end of June with 34 quartets registered. This is the largest number for many years and shows how keen we all are to get back to in-person singing.

In July, I am attending the Barbershop Harmony Society Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, with Education and Judging Director Alison Thompson. A packed schedule as you can see. And of course, our own Convention is taking shape and I have been so pleased to listen to the Belles of Three Spires, Steel City Voices and Bristol Fashion practice their songs for Convention.

Natalie Feddon, LABBS Chair



European Barbershop Convention

It was so exciting travelling to Sweden, to see our choruses and quartets compete with the best of Europe in the delayed EBC 2021+1, run by SNOBS and SA Nordic Light Region 32. The competition took place at the Helsingborg Arena in Helsingborg, Sweden - just fifteen minutes across the water from Denmark - and featured 31 choruses and 57 quartets, from ten different countries.

The event was over four days, with LABBS represented every day. Wednesday saw Hashtag and Scandal in the Mixed Quartet Competition, and they were thrilled to be able to present their package in front of a large audience. Thursday saw Avalon and Venus Effect on stage in the Women's Quartet Competition, and later in the evening, EQ Rendezvous performed in the Mixed Chorus Competition. Liz Smith and Rose Palmer from Amersham A Cappella

sang with both EQ Rendezvous and Amersham, and Rose noted that she had been a member of LABBS for 20 years, and Liz for 15 years, and this was their first time appearing with a top chorus in such a prestigious competition. EQ Rendezvous were announced as bronze medal winners and they were so delighted to have increased their score from the previous weekend when they sang at the BABS convention.

Friday saw the announcement of the winners of all the quartet competitions. Boo de Bruin of Avalon said they didn't feel any pressure at all as they had just gone for the fun of taking part, and so when the winners of the European Ladies Quartets final were announced, she burst into tears and her husband Alex had to tell her it was true that Avalon had won! Sophie Wilson and Karen Lillywhite had already left for England, so Helen Whittick and Boo had to go on stage without them to collect

their gold medals.

Saturday was the Ladies Chorus Competition, with Amersham A Cappella and Crystal Chords appearing late in the afternoon. They both performed the most wonderful packages, producing fantastic harmonies and entertainment.

The week ended as expected - with an afterglow! LABBS members enjoyed singing Bo Rhapsody, Anthem and Lazy Day, and there was a sing-off between the Crystals and Amersham. A good time was had by all!

Natalie Feddon, LABBS Chair

EBC photos © Dick Gillberg Photography, www.dickgillberg.com



Avalon



Amersham A Cappella



EQ Rendezvous



Hashtag



Scandal



Crystal Chords



Venus Effect

BABS Sing2022

The British Association of Barbershop Singers were delighted to welcome everybody to Harrogate for Sing2022 at the end of April. Here is a little snapshot of the weekend. To read more, make sure you check out the June issue of HEX magazine, coming soon.

Shanna Wells, Director of Marketing and Events, BABS



Forefront - Headline Guests



Malevox - BABS Small Chorus Award Winners and Bronze Medallists



Meantime - BABS Male Chorus Contest Champions



The Bristol Mix - BABS Mixed Chorus Contest Champions



Limelight - BABS National Quartet Champions



The Royal Harmonics - LABBS Entertainment Award Winners

A landmark barbershop reunion for BHS Convention 2022

More singers in more combinations in more venues than ever before – a MASSIVE return to barbershop – are the promise of the Barbershop Harmony Society 2022 International Convention and Contests.

“No matter how you love to barbershop—as a performer, fan, learner, tagger, whatever—you’ll find the people and activities to refill your barbershop tank,” said Dusty Schleier, BHS Director of Meetings and Conventions.

At Harmonizer press time in April, 44 choruses were registered to compete, and quartet preliminary contests were on track to qualify upwards of 60 quartets for the international contests. Additionally, 25 quartets were queued up for the Next Generation Barbershop Varsity Quartet Contest, and potentially two choruses for the Varsity Chorus Contest.

And on top of that, a new offering, the Quartet and Chorus Festivals will give ensembles a chance to perform for international audiences in a non-competitive setting.

Add in Harmony University education programming and casual opening night parties and parades on Monday and Tuesday of convention week, and you have a reunion of landmark proportions.

It’s all part of an ongoing effort to expand the programming variety for guests, and accessibility for performers – hallmarks of the Everyone in Harmony Strategic Plan.



“Barbershop conventions are about celebrating harmony in every form, with all people,” said Marketing Director, Devin Anna Bradford. “We’ve expanded access to our biggest stages, not just by gender, but by more ways to participate. Everyone will feel right at home at the Charlotte convention.”

“The city of Charlotte itself will really enhance that reunion feeling,” said Dusty. “All our convention hotels are within walking distance of all convention events, with FREE light rail connecting the headquarters hotel and events spaces at the convention center to the contest site in the Spectrum Center. Great dining and entertainment options are directly across the street in the EpiCentre. Charlotte will be the barbershop party you’ve been aching for!”

For full housing, schedule, safety, and registration info, see www.barbershop.org/charlotte

Club Updates

A warm welcome to our newest club, Blackdown Acapella

I have been so pleased to be continuing my mission to visit all clubs, and it was with great excitement that I was able to go down to Chard in Somerset to meet the members of Blackdown Acapella, a brand new LABBS club. Blackdown Acapella have only recently formed and are very keen to compete at our Convention in October. I was able to award all members with their LABBS certificates and pins, and to give the club their certificate for joining LABBS. I also got to enjoy them performing *Wish I Was a Punk Rocker* which you can watch [here](#).

Thanks to Jill Cook, our Membership Director, for advising them on all things LABBS, and to Sandra Matanle of GraceNotes, who went to visit as their LABBS Liaison Officer, and to check they were singing in the barbershop style. We welcome Blackdown Acapella to the LABBS family, and I know you will all make them most welcome.

Natalie Feddon, LABBS Chair



Hello from Blackdown Acapella!

Blackdown Acapella was conceived in September 2021

by Kirstie Spencer and I over a cup of tea, then a couple of gin and tonics, and finally a rather large glass of wine (or two!). Kirstie has been a barbershop singer since 2009, a Director since 2013, and has always dreamt of starting her own chorus. We wanted to create an award-winning, fun-loving, inclusive chorus - it was as simple as that! We knew it was important to set our ambition and values up-front before we did any recruiting so our members knew what they were signing up for, so we spent a couple of weekends creating those and our launch plans.

With the other founding members - Michelle Knight, Liz Hutchin and Louise Buxton - we kicked off with a Free Taster Day in December 2021, when

we asked interested women to come along, having learned Shallow from A Star is Born (we led Zoom sessions to help them along before the day), and we provided free refreshments and lunch. We were excited to welcome over 30 women to the Chard Guildhall and yes, all of them were off-music. It was wonderful. We spent time sharing our ambition and values, and at the end of the day, we performed to our families and friends - quite the thrill! From that event we received 20 firm commitments so we kicked off rehearsals on January 6th 2022, and carried on recruiting. We have been extremely impressed with the power of the Community Pages in Facebook, and most of our new recruits have come through social media recruitment. We are now at 26 auditioned members and are still recruiting as we are not yet balanced - we have five tenors, so we are

building our chorus around our tenor section!

We decided to seek membership of LABBS when we became aware of the excellence of the educational programmes, the international opportunities, and frankly, the very warm welcome we received when we reached out to the Board. We were delighted to welcome Natalie Feddon in early April to our rehearsal, and she did us the honour of presenting us with our audition certificates and LABBS membership!

We are thrilled with our progress so far, and we have performed in a few local events which has continued to build our experience and confidence. We look forward to seeing you all in October, and thank you for the warm welcome.

Zelda Gray, Chair, Blackdown Acapella



Blackdown Acapella



Natalie Feddon presents Blackdown Acapella's MD Kirstie Spencer, and Chair Zelda Gray with their LABBS certificate

Normality resumes!

The start of a new year is always welcomed in with our AGM. It's a good opportunity to take time to reflect on the previous year and make plans for the exciting year ahead - and what a year ahead we have!

With no masks, risers out, and face to face singing back in full force, the first few months of 2022 have been pretty good! In February we welcomed LABBS Chair Natalie Feddon to our rehearsal, who joined us as we were rehearsing for the North Wales Festival. It was great to meet her and we're loving keeping track of where she'll be next!

The festival took place in March, and this was our first competition for over two years. It was a great opportunity for many of our newer members to finally experience what it is like to perform on

a stage to an audience. The North Wales Festival is always a great affair, and it was wonderful to see so many singers from other non-barbershop categories enjoying the day.

In April we had another singout at the fantastic Bents Garden Centre in Glazebury. We raised money for Marie Curie, and there may have been a little bit of shopping by some of our members! If you're ever local to the area, make sure you pop in - the cakes are particularly impressive!

The rest of 2022 is looking pretty busy for Cheshire Chord Company, and with this going to press just before BABS, things finally feel like they're getting back to normal! We are so excited to see everyone again at LABBS 2022!

Make sure you keep up to date with everything Cheshire Chord by following our social media pages - [@CheshireChord](https://www.instagram.com/CheshireChord).

**Julie Phillips, PRO
Cheshire Chord Company**



Fascinating Rhythm gets fully Rob-Mance-ipated

2022 so far has been enlightening for FR

all thanks to Rob Mance. Meeting him first in January for a rehearsal, and then for an intensive weekend's work, we loved it so much (and hopefully he did too!), that we welcomed Rob back three months later.

Rob said, "What a joy to meet Jo and Fascinating Rhythm for the first time! After having to delay this trip a few times due to the pandemic, the anticipation for our meeting was high – and the chorus did not disappoint!"

Throughout our weekend together, Rob worked with each singer to improve their posture and vocal technique. Encouraging small adjustments, Rob

created a step-change in the ensemble sound.

He also introduced some new warm-up exercises focused on improving pitch and vocal harmony. Since then, Fascinating Rhythm's Musical Director, Jo, and FR have been working hard to embed Rob's advice.

Rob said, "A couple of things really stood out to me. FR was so ready and willing to try anything. This open and encouraging culture led to significant growth over our three days together. Second, Jo, is a driven and dedicated leader whose attention to self-growth, and the growth and nurturing of her singers, is noticeable and admirable. I absolutely look forward to many more sessions with FR."

During his visit in April, Rob worked with us to build on the individual vocal instruction we received, and then apply it to the ensemble. Working on songs we are preparing for Cheltenham

Musical Festival in May, as well as a dive into one of our LABBS



Jo and Rob

convention songs, Rob really drilled down the detail available in each musical line. It's fair to say the work covered has added multiple layers of artistry and performance to these songs, and we are really looking forward to continuing to develop these numbers and sharing them with our audiences

Wendy Howse, AMD, said, "Rob Mance has totally inspired me to become the best singer I can be. He has also inspired the whole chorus to work together as a team to put all our newly learned tools into place. 2022 – bring it on!"

Chloe Roberts, PRO, Fascinating Rhythm



Fascinating Rhythm and Rob Mance

A busy April for the Gems!

It's so good to be back and performing to the public again.

We started April off by joining Grand Central Chorus to share their 30 years celebration show.

Following that, we had an Open Evening which was visited by our LABBS Liaison Officer, Sue Ward. Sue came along to present Maralyn Wilkinson with her 35 years' Service Award. Maralyn is a founder member of the chorus and has served on the committee, holding several different posts since our formation 24 years ago. Our Chair, Julia Burns, also presented Eve Purser with her Honorary Membership to Gem. Eve was a founder member of the chorus and in the beginning, acted as a director. Eve also played a vital role on the dress committee preparing our outfits. Another of our founder members, Jan Robinson, also received her Honorary Membership and was thanked for her continued outstanding support for Gem from behind the scenes.

April also saw the Draycott and Wilne WI Group visit the Gems. We always like to see these wonderful ladies as they

invariably share their lovely cakes with us all. Mmm! These ladies are dear to us all as they were Gems first public performance audience back in 1998, when they invited us to one of their WI meetings.

April was rounded off by an event which lead Zoe, and her sister, bari Charlotte, have waited two long years for - Zoe and Phil's wedding. They'd had to postpone it twice due to Covid, and so it was wonderful to finally get to celebrate with them. Of course there were a few songs, and plenty of food, drink and dancing, and we all had a fantastic time. Congratulations Zoe and Phil!

We are hoping to see everyone back in Bournemouth at Convention again this year. It's been such a long time since we were all together.

We'll see you all there, but until then, happy rehearsing!

**Jenny Smedley, PRO
GEM Connection**



Jan receiving her Honorary Membership from Chairperson, Julia



Eve receiving her Honorary Membership from Chairperson, Julia



Maralyn receiving her Long Service Award from LLO, Sue Ward

A super start to 2022 for Junction 14

January

Junction 14 had its first social event of the year when we all gathered for a lovely meal at a local pub, The Cross Keys. It was so nice to be together after the troubles of the last two years, and of course, we had to sing a few songs before we left to the delight of the staff and other diners!

February

We had our first performance of the year, singing to our nominated charity from the last two years, Different Strokes. We were thrilled to have raised £493 for the charity, and to perform for them, too. They were delighted!

March

We headed to MK Arts Festival at The Venue Theatre in Milton Keynes, to defend our winners' title in the barbershop category.

We performed on stage in front of an adjudicator, and we were delighted to win once again, for the fourth year running. It was a wonderful experience, especially for Liz Ellis as this was her first festival performing with us. We couldn't have done it without our wonderful MD Hannah Washington, and we are eternally grateful for everything she does for us. Four of our chorus members also competed in the quartet section. Hannah Washington our MD, Tina Ruggles, Amanda Martin and Max Freeman did really well and came second. We had some of our past members in the audience to support us which was lovely

too. It was great to be back on winning form.

We also presented two LABBS Long Service Awards in February and March - see page 25.

What a lovely start to the year!

Val Hutchinson, PRO, Junction 14



MK Arts Festival winners 2022

More Harmony is off to a flying start!

It's been a busy and exciting start to the year

for More Harmony Women's Barbershop Chorus!

After a successful Christmas singing course, we were thrilled that all the singers who came along to give us a try returned to us in January, and have since passed their auditions to become full members!

With another new singer joining our ranks recently, we're feeling great about the future and hope to continue to grow our fabulous, friendly chorus. We're currently planning a big recruitment drive, so watch this space!

In February, we were delighted to have the awesome Emma Shanks and Rachel Small back for another round of coaching. We last played host to the dynamic duo back in 2020 (just before lockdown!), so to have them return at last was really lovely, and everyone worked incredibly hard across three coaching sessions. The results were so fantastic, we

made our MD cry. She assures us they were happy tears! We are incredibly grateful to Emma and Rachel for boosting our confidence, making us realise what a truly special group More Harmony is, and for showing us how lucky we are to be singing together, making such a joyous noise! We were given so many compliments, I'm amazed our heads still fit through the doors of our rehearsal venue, but we were

all so proud of the amazing sound we achieved in a relatively short space of time, and we have our eyes firmly set on Convention now (albeit next year, when we've upped our numbers a bit!).

We're incredibly fortunate to have an MD who is able to compose unique arrangements for us, and we're all exceptionally excited to start work on some of her latest creations. From our

very own version of Billy Joel's Uptown Girl, to a bit of Kpop, we can't wait to get our teeth into lots of new songs.

It's an absolute joy to be back doing sing outs, to have everyone at rehearsal in person, and to be planning for the future once more. More Harmony has stuck together, kept things fun, and worked hard to get ourselves performance-ready again after the strangeness of the last two years. We reckon we're off to a flying start and we're excited to see where we go from here!



Rachel, Lesley and Emma with More Harmony's mascots, Harmonie Unicorn and Neveah Narwhal. Harmonie and Neveah are presented to the singers or sections Lesley thinks have done a really good job at rehearsal each week!

**Emma Tofi, PRO
More Harmony**

Harmony from the heart

Norwich Harmony put on a memorial concert to remember and celebrate our beloved Pam Weeds who had been a huge part of the chorus, as head of our Dress Committee, a Revered Extra, and an official welcomer for newcomers. The concert was to raise funds for EACH, the East Anglia's Children's Hospices charity which was always dear to her heart.

Norwich Harmony opened the concert with 'Let Me Be There', and went on to sing some of the new numbers we had learned just before or during the lockdown period. Then the stage



Ahoy there!

was ceded to the Poringland Junior School Choir, who sang charmingly, working particularly on 'partner songs'. Pam had organised a concert a few years ago to raise funds for EACH, this school's choir had been invited, and the teacher who brought them enjoyed our singing so much she joined our chorus! Our newest quartet, Splash! also sang, both barbershop and modern a cappella. Having formed when lockdown rules relaxed enough to allow people to meet outdoors, they will be taking part in the quartet prelims in June. The first half finished with Norwich's mixed chorus, Mosaic, of which Pam had also been a member, competing at BABS' convention in 2019.

Fine City Chorus, our brother chorus, opened the second half and then it was the return of the Pirates on the Good Ship Harmony. Based on a set originally performed at Convention in 2019, we recalled Pam's last live performance with us back in February 2019, and her last appearance with us in



Norwich Harmony sparkling in our first performance of the year

our lockdown video of 'Say a Little Prayer' which was our submission for the online convention weekend. Pam's daughter spoke briefly about her late mother and the family was presented with a photo book containing chorus members' memories of our friend.

The concert raised more than a thousand pounds and while we were sad to say goodbye, it was a wonderful tribute to a wonderful lady.

Here's to you, Pam Weeds (single barbershop clap).

Pen Robinson and Ruth Vellacott, Chair Norwich Harmony

Back on our beloved risers at last!

We are delighted to find ourselves back on our beloved risers after two years and two weeks of nomadic wandering rehearsals. We have sung in football stands, hotel ballrooms and back gardens, and are finally back in our true home. We even enjoyed putting up the risers, despite much head scratching and cries of "Watch your fingers!"

In April, a group of Rosettes went to the Heron Theatre in Beetham to watch one of our leads, Karen Simpson, giving an

amazing performance in 'Glorious'. The play is about Florence Foster Jenkins, 'The worst singer in the world', which was made into a film starring Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant. Well, we can say in all sincerity, that Karen gave an absolute tour de force performance and we all thoroughly enjoyed it. Needless to say, Karen has promised not to emulate Mrs Foster Jenkins when she returns to the risers now that the show is over!

Although we aren't competing at Convention this year, we have exciting plans. These include a coaching session

in June from Rob Mance all the way from the USA, numerous sing-outs, and our Big Bandstand Bonanza devised by Helen Jones, one of our tenors. We will be travelling round Lancashire in a minibus singing at a variety of Bandstands in parks throughout the county. Helen is busy writing out forms for permission from the various councils involved. It will be a long, tiring, but very enjoyable day, and hopefully we will find a few new Rosettes along the way.

Ann Atkin, The Red Rosettes



Glorious Karen!



Teresa Phillips hoovering our risers, ready for our return



Joyful Rosettes celebrating being back on the risers

Life is a fabulous festival for River City Chorus

We're back and doesn't it feel good!

We do hope you are all well, have returned to normal rehearsals and performances, and are enjoying singing just as much as we are.

Well, where do we start? After our marvellous crazy Christmas party (you had to be there!), we certainly started the year with a mighty big bang.



River City's scratch quartet, formed for National Barbershop Quartet Day

With Maggie Heal now taking the reins as our Musical Director and Helen Joy as our new Chair, it certainly was a great start to the New Year. We have also enlisted the help of the fabulous Jo Thorn from Fascinating Rhythm to coach us throughout the year and we

couldn't even begin to express how much we are enjoying these sessions. It's just a joy.

In March, we entered three categories at the annual Exeter Performing Arts Festival. We were all a bit apprehensive as we hadn't competed for over two years! Unfortunately, our MD, Maggie, went down with the dreaded Covid and our wonderful deputy, Cathy Hamzelou, had to make her debut and step in at the very last minute to direct the performances. We managed to win all three categories gaining two distinctions and an honour. There was some celebrating that night and we owe enormous thanks to the hard work that Maggie, Cathy and Jo put in for us to get such good comments.

As I write this, we have just finished an interview with BBC Radio Devon. Today (April 11th) is National Barbershop Quartet Day and we were asked if a quartet could sing live at 8.30 in the morning! As we had to get a scratch quartet together, we spent quite a bit of time over the weekend recording and videoing ourselves ready for the live performance, and what great fun we had in the sun! The presenter was lovely, it gave some great publicity to our chorus, and we thoroughly enjoyed our moment of fame. It has also inspired us to get our

chorus together for a good old sing song on the beach soon.

Looking forward to the rest of the year!

Di Bibey, Press Officer, River City Chorus



All smiles with Jo Thorn



River City, celebrating their success at Exeter Performing Arts Festival

Delayed celebrations

Second City Sound should have been celebrating

our 30th anniversary in 2020, hosting dinner and a show. It would have been our Pearl anniversary and we were looking around for a suitable name for the show, but Covid put paid to that.

Back in 1990, Olive Ryder and some friends set up the Birmingham Ladies Barbershop Harmony Club (as we were then known) in her front room, because they enjoyed hearing their husbands sing with Anvil, the men's barbershop chorus, and didn't want to be left out.

Olive is still singing with us and has the distinction of being our longest standing member and the only founder member still with Second City Sound. The photo to the top right is of Olive with our newest 'member' - Musical Director Rob Barber, who

has multiple medals to his name. Since this photograph was taken we have held a singing course and so we hope to have some more newbies join us soon!

We have been very busy over the past few months. As well as a singing course, we have also enjoyed two weekend coaching sessions with the fantastic Sally McLean. We had never met before and I was nervous about taking part in a one-to-one session with her. I need not have been worried; she helped me discover a 'new voice' and found me a 'buddy' to stand next to on the risers. My lifetime ambition to sing with a chorus



seems to be coming to fruition!

Although we had to put our celebrations on hold we have still been busy, and we are looking forward to our 35th

anniversary. A Google search has told me that this will be Coral. Now, what can we call our 2025 anniversary show? Suggestions please, to Sandra Moss, Club Secretary at moss_sandra@hotmail.com.
Sandra Moss, Secretary Second City Sound



Spinnaker in Springtime

It's been a busy time in Spinnakerland!

Since Christmas we've been learning new songs, searching for a new rehearsal venue, voted in our 2022 Board members at our AGM, held an Easter themed fundraising raffle, had a Bring and Buy sale, and we welcomed three new members.

A Spinnakerette's wedding

We were also delighted to sing at the beautiful wedding celebration of our lovely bari section leader Liz and husband Tom. Their official marriage ceremony took place last year however Covid restrictions at the time sadly meant their reception had to be postponed until now. Liz looked stunning in her gown and even joined us to sing with her trusty pitch pipe in hand, which Tom had kept safe in his suit pocket during the ceremony. We sang Liz's favourite repertoire songs

One Fine Day, Can't Take My Eyes Off You, Can You Feel The Love Tonight and Shine. Mr & Mrs Taylor have recently returned from a fabulous honeymoon in Florida, and we wish them a lifetime of happiness together.



Liz's wedding celebration

A return to retreat

In April, with great excitement, over 50 Spinnakerettes attended our first retreat since 2019. We stayed at the Langstone Resort Hotel in sunny Hayling Island, where we were expertly coached once again by the phenomenal Stuart Sides. He worked his magic bringing our exciting LABBS '22 convention package to life, what a Wizard of Harmony!



Retreat coaching with Stuart Sides

It was an exhausting but fun packed weekend with the added bonus of our very own Spinnaker's Got Talent show after dinner on the Saturday evening. We had 13 acts taking part, from soloists, duos and quartets, to small groups, a guitarist and a clarinettist, to hilarious section skits, and we were thoroughly entertained.

25 Year LABBS Membership

At retreat we surprised our fabulous Deputy Tenor Section Leader Nicky Best with her LABBS 25 year pin and certificate, a personalised card signed by the chorus, and a scrumptious cake, obviously! You can see Nicky and her cake on page 25.

Nicky said "I'm not sure where the last 25 years have gone! The passion for singing has never left me, and I am just so happy that every week I get to sing with not only an amazing tenor section, but my fabulous chorus, with the best MD John Palmer, at the helm. Thank you so much".

Tracy Daniel, PRO, Spinnaker

Exciting times for Welwyn Harmony

In the last couple of

months the pace has really picked up for Welwyn Harmony. In March we took part in our first competition since 2019. Due to Covid, we fielded a much-reduced chorus, but are so proud of the members who went and sang their hearts out.

In April we ran a three-week 'Come and Sing' taster course and recruited some great new singers. Such a delight to be live again, and able to share the joy of a cappella singing, instead of a Zoom course like last year. And now we are settling into a summer of singing at outdoor village, town and garden events, indoor events and our first big concert for two years – and preparing for Convention, of course! Exciting times!



Welwyn Harmony dress rehearsal

Sarah Stevens, Chair, Welwyn Harmony

An exciting 2022 for The Belles

We are gathering momentum in 2022, with many and varied singouts and events. It's proving to be a very exciting year! We have settled into our new premises and welcomed LABBS Chair, Natalie Feddon to our rehearsal on 20th April.

In March we sang in Coventry Cathedral, having been invited by Creative Lives as part of the Coventry UK City of Culture. This was to show how those invited showed resilience, imagination and kindness as they kept people connected and expressed themselves creatively during the pandemic. We also did a sing-out for a Nuneaton WI group, The Treacle Tarts, which finally happened after

being postponed due to the pandemic, and it was great fun.

Also in March, we were finally able to enjoy our retreat - 'Back to Business' - at Ashorne Hill Hotel, Warwickshire. Our Committee and Music Team worked so hard to achieve this amazing weekend, and it felt like it was just the right time to build up our techniques and, of course, to develop our Convention songs. Three of our members were awarded with their 20 years' Belles certificates: Anne Concannon, Elaine Robson and Helen Sutton.

Then in April we were able to enjoy our Annual Dinner. The theme was 'Belles Tropicana', with a holiday atmosphere

to celebrate together. Lesley Wooldridge worked with a brilliant team to deliver a great evening, with Jayne Edmonds' fantastic flower arrangements giving a tropical ambience. It was really beautiful to finally be together for our Annual Dinner again.

There are more exciting projects ahead for us as 2022 progresses, including a one-day workshop on Saturday 7th May - which we will have already held and thoroughly enjoyed by the time this goes to print!

Eileen Askew, PRO
The Belles of Three Spires



Annual Dinner table settings



Best headdress was won by Suzanne Carey



Double pineapples! Ursula Redpath and Chesca Simmons



Lesley who was the star in organising the dinner, with one of Jayne Edmonds flower arrangements



Our newest member, Becky Morrall, with Jayne Edmonds



Sue Seddon (Chair), Lucy Guess (MD), Natalie Feddon (LABBS Chair), and Holly Dawes (Vice-Chair)



Anne Concannon receiving her certificate, with Sue Seddon



Becky Morrall who joined the Belles in March 2021, and was able to receive her New Member certificate finally in person! With Sue Seddon, Chair



Elaine Robson receiving her 20 years certificate, with Sue Seddon, our Chair

When the roof caved in – literally!

The White Rosettes had their resilience tested after Storm Eunice wreaked havoc on our usual rehearsal space at the beginning of February. With a tree falling on the roof of our venue, temporarily condemning it as unsafe for use, our committee had to quickly scout around for appropriate buildings for us to practice in. With the help of a few friends, they quickly came up trumps. It would take more than a storm to stop us! Check out our photos to see some of the places we've been.

We've also been busy presenting awards to well-deserved recipients at our AGM. Congratulations to:

- Rae Watney - Service to Chorus Award and the Jenny Share Award
- Sally Johnson - Commitment to Chorus Award
- Richard Van De Steenoven - Alan Peech Award
- Fiona Earnshaw - Barbershopper of the Year Award
- Sarah St.Leger-Honeybone - Singing Award

We have presented three members with Long Service Awards too, which you can see on page 25.

Ruth Kirby, PRO, The White Rosettes



Just when we were excited to get back on the risers...



Gorgeous overtones at All Saints Church, Leeds



The Theatre at Woodhouse Grove School, Leeds



Adjusting to rehearsing at Wigton United Reformed Church, Leeds



Finally back on the risers!

ABC Reboot Camp

After two years of Covid restrictions, rehearsals, and parties via Zoom, the committee organised a reboot camp for March. An opportunity to work on and improve what we do well, to polish up some rusty areas, and probably learn something new.

So, on a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon we met at Barlow Village Hall, feeling positive and laden with grub for our post workout feast (we are the Abbey Belles after all!). Green polo shirts dusted off, we were all smiling, optimistic and ready for whatever was planned for us.

Our first retreat day together was a resounding success! Trot and Helen put together a tight schedule - it was named Reboot Camp for that reason, after all! There were so many elements to the day, it's hard to remember them all.

- We worked hard on our posture and breathing to make the best of our sound.
- We learned some interesting new warm-ups from Carol, Janet, Natalie and Sylvia.
- There was lots of gorgeous harmony singing of course, and each section was taken out in turn for our MD, Catrina, to listen to individual voices.
- Helen had us work in sections focusing on dynamics.
- By popular demand, Janet demonstrated an Indian dance called Jai-Ho that we always enjoy doing (with various degrees of expertise from some of us!).
- Our next focus was on how and what we need to do to be 'better', and how to tackle that. It was a very interesting discussion and lots of points to develop for certain. So, Helen began a '5 Ws' spider chart to identify what 'better' really means. We began with 'What' and will revisit the other areas another time.
- As the final session of the afternoon came to its conclusion, Sylvia went through a cooling down exercise of gentle stretching from head to toe. We were all still grinning and enjoying ourselves enormously!

We love to sing together, but also enjoyed amazing food and some fun games after, to complete the day.

Onto the other thing that unites us as a group, FOOD! Loads of it! There were some beautiful dishes and laden plates all round. Thanks to the kitchen fairies (Sylvia and Victoria) who



did all the washing up and tidying during the pandemonium of the party games.

Present swap is cruel, you never quite end up with the gift you think you've chosen!

Pass-the-parcel was a bit of daftness, and everyone joined in performing the charades in interesting ways. We were highly expectant of some physically impossible positions from Dubious Janet when she lay down and asked for assistance.

The finale was the chocolate game and was an absolute riot! No cutlery involved this time and a tub of Cadbury's Roses rather than a slab of chocolate. Scalps were hoicked from heads in an effort to get the hat on, mittens were muddled, and chopsticks went flying! Mary's technique was unusual but highly effective and totally hilarious, and Ann somehow ended up wearing the tub.

We laughed all day long, and the WhatsApp messages pinged into the night. I should say to everyone involved in the organisation of the camp, it was a huge success and well worth the effort - thank you! Our bond as Belles is as strong as ever; long may we continue!

Sue Lord (Sueperb) and Natalie Kendrew, Abbey Belles Chorus



EEK! We sang with Deke!

Bristol Fashion and Fascinating

Rhythm had a wonderful evening of song with the 'Godfather of A cappella' [Deke Sharon](#) of Pitch Perfect and Sing Off fame.

Packed with excited singers, beautiful Christchurch in Downend, Bristol, was a glorious setting for the first maskless singing event that we had attended since Convention 2019, and we were in for a treat! Deke was such an engaging host, not only with years of experience as a coach, but also showing a fine wit and a songbook of aca-stories to delight the crowd.

With a focus on 'getting in the groove' and 'singing from the heart', more than 120 singers worked on two of Deke Sharon's musical arrangements: Good Old A Cappella (first released by The Persuasions) and Seasons of Love from the Broadway musical Rent.

Fascinating Rhythm's Musical Director, Jo, said "It was amazing to hear how quickly the songs took shape; we certainly filled the rafters with some amazing harmonies! It's fair to say this part of the evening was uplifting and joyous."

After the ensemble singing conducted by Deke, we had the treat of listening to the beautiful sounds of [Fascinating Rhythm](#). Deke helped the chorus to work on two signature tunes from their repertoire: Billy Joel's And So It Goes and the Doobie Brothers' Listen To The Music. Deke took Fascinating Rhythm on a journey from singing with great emotion to being comfortable engaging wholly with the audience.

Next, [Bristol Fashion](#) took to the stage for their own under-the-spotlight coaching. Singing two songs, both arranged by their very own MD Craig Kehoe, they were delighted by Deke's comments and enjoyed his suggestions on performance.

Bravo to their brave singers who featured as a quartet as they explored some of those ideas. It really was very exciting! It was lovely to see and hear Bristol Fashion sing 'live' after two years; their songs were breathtaking and beautifully delivered.

Deke is clearly passionate about what he does. With offers of support, arranging, and guidance made to the whole auditorium, it was wonderful to see the LABBS Youth Chorus co-ordinator - our own Lamorna Hooker - enlist his help for future Youth Chorus projects.

To finish, both BF and FR were joined by a host of LABBS singers, including [Black Sheep Harmony](#) and [Cleeve Harmony](#), for an incredible and emotional rendition of Anthem, directed by both Craig and the lovely Jo Dean. You can watch that performance [here](#).

Singing and learning new songs with singers from other Bristol choruses, making new friends and meeting up with old ones, was such an amazing way for the singing community to get back together after the last two years!

Thank you to Beth Morgan, who runs [The Creative Choir Leader](#) and directs [The Great Day Choir](#), for organising this great event.

We loved Deke's ethos and approach, and the evening served as a very timely reminder of why we do this amazing hobby of ours. As Deke says - 'it can literally save a life'.

Chloe Roberts, PRO, Fascinating Rhythm
Janis Smith, PRO, Bristol Fashion



Craig and Deke



Deke and Jo

From the boards to the risers

GraceNotes have had a great start to the year.

As well as MD Heidi and Asst. MD Sian being excited to finally get back to in-person education at the LABBS Directors Day, we've also welcomed some more new members and a beautiful new baby girl, Caitlyn, to our chorus family.

While the last couple of years have been challenging, we do feel incredibly lucky to have grown and been able to welcome so many new people to our wonderful chorus, some of whom are joining us as preparations for Convention are well underway. We're busy rehearsing songs, modelling new dresses, and filling our calendar with singouts to hone our performance skills. With all that going on, it would be easy to overlook how



Post-show drinks, toasting our very talented GraceNotes

important our relationships with each other are.

GraceNotes have always had a rich and varied social life, with friendships made at chorus that reach far beyond our rehearsal space. There's always something going on, be that tea and cake in someone's garden, an impromptu gin night, or perhaps a trip to the theatre. We enjoy these events very much, and they are a great opportunity to not only spend time with our existing chorus friends, but to also get to know our newer members a little better.

Our April social was fantastic! We went to see 'The Show Must Go On!', a production staged by our local young persons' theatre group, Page2Stage.

The group is a home-from-home for GraceNotes: MD Heidi, bass Wen, baris Jaq and Ellie, leads Nicki, Nikki and Ria, and tenors Heather and Megan are all members of the production team, and our baris, Elise and Lily, were two of the stars of the show.

The story centred around a group of young people who, after being stuck in lockdown for far too long, just wanted to get out there and put on a show – a situation many of us can relate to! As well as some outstanding acting, there was singing, there was dancing, there were amazing sets and



Stars of the show, Elise and Lily

costumes, and we thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

Young person's theatre like this is great for building confidence and skills that can be transferred to barbershop, and we are fortunate to have welcomed several talented members of Page2Stage to GraceNotes over the years. That looks set to continue as Beth, Page2Stage member and daughter of lead, Nikki, looks forward to joining us in the very near future.

If your club has a young person's theatre group nearby, do catch one of their performances. We promise you'll have a wonderful time, and you might even recruit a member or two while you're there!

**Sandra Matanle, Chair
GraceNotes Acapella**

Belief, commitment, passion, unity, support, friendship, trust: the foundations of our success!

Harmony InSpires celebrates its last quarter.

Hari Birtles was awarded the Trustee Award – the second only such award ever made by the chorus – for her outstanding services through lockdown. Her inspirational leadership not only sustained members' enthusiasm, but also grew chorus numbers beyond expectation.

Also celebrated for unwavering positivity and good humour, Dominique Kleyn was voted Barbershopper of the Year by chorus members, acknowledging her role as chair during two of the most challenging years the chorus has faced.

And in March, Harmony InSpires enjoyed a fabulous weekend of coaching - the first this year - with Sally McLean. With focus and hard work, the chorus continues to make immense progress,

and our members had some brilliant things to say about the weekend:

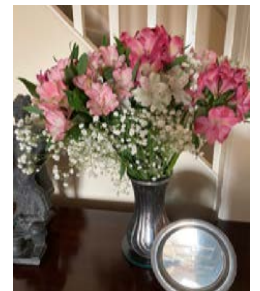
***"It was wonderful (and exhausting!)
"A completely different chorus to six months ago"
"Impressed by the commitment, stamina and willingness to learn ... a unique and strong position ...let's celebrate and be proud".***

Harmony InSpires looks forward to the forthcoming events of 2022.

**Rachel Buglass, PRO
Harmony InSpires**



Hari Birtles receiving the Trustees Award from Dominique Kleyn, recipient of the BOTY Award



Barbershopper of the Year award



Coaching with Sally McLean

Presenting Amersham's Fab Four

Celebrating good times!

Not only is this our fantastic 40th Anniversary year, but we're also delighted to congratulate four of our fabulous members on receiving some very special Long Service pins.

Our Awards Party night kicked off with a big Amersham welcome for none other than LABBS roving Chair, Natalie Feddon, who had travelled up from Kent to share one of our last rehearsals in the run-up to the European Convention in Sweden. Plus, hand out the honours!

The 25 Year Award went to legendary lead, Lesley Dell. 40th pins went to equally lovely lead, Anne Jones, Lynne

Owen, our brilliant bass Section Leader and Assistant MD, and our much-loved Life and Associate Member, Doris Baker. You can read their barbershop stories below and on page 24.

It was a wonderful, emotional evening, topped off with an awesome cake by our Star Baker, Tina.

Congratulations ladies, you are truly an inspiration to us all.

**Hils Apicella, PRO
Amersham A Cappella**



AAC Long Service Awards

A lifetime of barbershop memories



Anne Jones with Natalie

I started singing with Chiltern Harmony when the wives and daughters (actually, I think I was the only daughter!), decided that the men in our lives were having way too much fun, and felt that we should sing too. I think deep down we knew we could do it just a little bit better than the men! So, my mum and I rolled up to the White Hill Centre in Chesham to join a band of maybe 30 others.

From memory the first two songs we learnt were Zip-a-dee-doo-dah and Amazing Grace.

Dresses were very different; if you were happy to go out in it, it just wasn't

outrageous or flamboyant enough! And of course, we always had to wear a hat. They were made a bit Blue Peter style; an old margarine tub, some bits of fabric and some PVA glue - perfect! I can't tell you how many times we were halfway to a sing out and had to turn around because someone had forgotten their hat!

During my 40 years I have been the treasurer, secretary and vice-chair, and made countless cups of tea and coffee - along with a lifetime of the happiest of memories.

Anne Jones, Amersham A Cappella

Congratulations and happy birthday, Doris!

Receiving her 40th Year

Long Service award at our Awards Party night was our much-loved Life and Associate Member, Doris Baker, who was 91 the next day! Doris and her husband, Cecil, are AAC's most devoted fans: their wonderful smiles genuinely lift our spirits every time they join us for rehearsals.

Like Anne, Doris was one of the founding members of Chiltern Harmony, as we were called way back in 1982. She recalls being invited by a friend's husband to join his new venture for female barbershoppers. Most of the ladies were married to members of the local men's club. As Doris tells it, they practised in a school hall in Chesham

for many years before going 'upmarket' to Amersham and changing their name to Amersham A Cappella.

Doris was the Chorus PRO and did all she could to boost membership. She worked as a delivery driver for the local florist in Amersham and took every opportunity to post chorus fliers through letterboxes, and pin them up in church foyers, libraries, and local shops everywhere she went. She recalls that initially there were around 25 members, and their great ambition was to win the LABBS Gold Medal!

Hils Apicella, PRO, Amersham A Cappella



Doris Baker with Natalie

Glowing and growing up with barbershop

My mum, Sheila

Blackburn was a founder member of Mountain Harmony in Mold so I started singing with them during school holidays from the age of 10 in 1989. Once I left school at 18, I became a fully-fledged member of the chorus and of LABBS. During my time with Mountain Harmony, we sang at the Dutch convention and also appeared on BBC1's The Eleventh Hour.

I decided to head over the border to join Cheshire Chord Company in 2001 where I got my first silver medal and sang songs such as 'It's Raining Men' and 'One Singular Sensation' - complete with top hats & canes!

In 2003, I relocated to Aylesbury and continued to commute up to Lymm for 6 months to rehearse on a Thursday evening, often arriving home at 1:30am!

During 2005, I kept seeing 'signs' that Chiltern Harmony was to be my next chorus. Their Learn to Sing adverts were everywhere! So, one Tuesday evening on

the final week of their course, I turned up in Amersham and haven't looked back since.

With the chorus, I've sung at the Dutch convention, on the pitch at Twickenham, in the Eurotunnel, at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and for a Sennheiser commercial - amongst many other things! I've also been a member of our Presentation Team/Dress Team and was Chair during 2020.

When I first competed with the chorus back in 2005 at Convention in Cardiff, we ranked 9th with approximately 35 members. I'm so proud to have been part of the growth and achievements of Amersham Acappella over the past 17 years, which took us to gold in 2019 with 84.2%.

I love my chorus!

Lesley Dell, Amersham A Cappella



Lesley Dell with Natalie

My wonderful barbershop world

I fell in love with

barbershop: in 1976 having listened to records of The Brons Tones, who were a Queens of Harmony Sweet Adeline Quartet. They inspired me and three friends from the Hemel Hempstead Operatic Society to form a quartet. We went to the Sweet Adelines



Lynne Owen with Natalie

Convention in London in 1977 as a quartet and were invited by Bron Dixon to go to the afterglow with her. We didn't know what an afterglow was, but we soon found out, arriving home at 4am, still buzzing!

In 1982, I became aware of a ladies' chorus which had started in Chesham. The four of us went along to a rehearsal with Chiltern Harmony (now Amersham A Cappella) and it's been my 'home' within LABBS ever since.

Within LABBS, I very much enjoyed a term as LABBS Membership Secretary, and later became a Regional Rep, the forerunner to LABBS Liaison Officer.

Within the chorus I have been the chair twice, membership secretary, club secretary, led the choreography team, am part of the music team, been bari section leader and am now bass section leader.

There have been several quartet highlights in my barbershop life. In 1991, Tapestry was the first female quartet The Big Orange Chorus of Florida had ever invited to sing on one of their chorus shows, and whilst in Florida, Tapestry were invited to sing in the English Pavilion at Epcot. Later that

year, Tapestry won gold at the LABBS Convention. This has to be the pinnacle of my quartet career. In 1992, Tapestry had the honour of representing LABBS at the World Harmony Jamboree, now the World Harmony Showcase, in New Orleans.

The highlights of my chorus life have been winning four chorus gold medals, and winning the single voice section of Sainsbury's Choir of the Year. Every time I get to sing with the wonderful women of AAC is also a highlight!

I have also had the privilege of being on stage at Convention directing Harmony InSpires when they were between directors, and the Highway Men, now Knights of Harmony, a BABS chorus.

All in all, it has been a busy but wonderful 46 years in the barbershop world.

Lynne Owen, Amersham A Cappella



Congratulations to Spinnakerette Nicky Best on receiving her 25 Year Long Service Award



White Rosettes Sally, Alison and Jane receiving their 40-year LSA awards from Chair, Fiona

Long Service Celebrations at Junction 14

During one of our February rehearsals, we presented one of our lovely leads, Sheila Carter, with her pin and certificate for 25 years as a LABBS member. Congratulations to Sheila! A wonderful achievement.

and certificate for 35 years as a LABBS member. Although Lyn is no longer with Junction 14, she was a member for many years, and it was lovely to present the award to her. Congratulations Lyn!

One of our past members, Lyn Kidby, also came along to one of our March rehearsals and we presented her with her pin

Val Hutchinson, PRO, Junction 14



Junction 14 Chairperson, Sue Bass, presenting Lyn Kidby with her 35 year award



Junction 14 Chairperson, Sue Bass, presenting Sheila Carter with her 25 year award

For Sale

Our new costume team are having a wardrobe sort out! We are selling two fabulous outfits. Neither have been used on the Convention stage and are new/barely worn.

Silver Sequin Shift dress, from Tu Sainsburys, originally £35.

Brand new with labels, hangers & covers:

x1 size 8 4x 10, 3x 12, 4x 14, 7x 16, 2x 18, 2x 20, 4x 22 = 27



Plus, barely worn: 2x size 8, 2x 10, 2x 12, 6 x 16, 4x 18, 2x 20 = 18

Total 45 dresses

£15 each for the new and £5 each for the barely worn

We would be happy to accept a sensible offer for the whole lot.

Wine Waterfall jackets, flattering and easy to fit/wear, brand new with labels and still in packet: x1 XXL, x7 L, x4 M = 12

Barely worn - some unused with labels attached:

x4 Small, x9 Medium, x3 XL, x1 XXL.
= 17

Total 29 jackets

£10 each for the new and £5 each for the barely worn

Again, we would be happy to accept a sensible offer for the lot.



Post and packing not included.

Contact Clare (Harmony Inspires) at chamblin24@gmail.com





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