

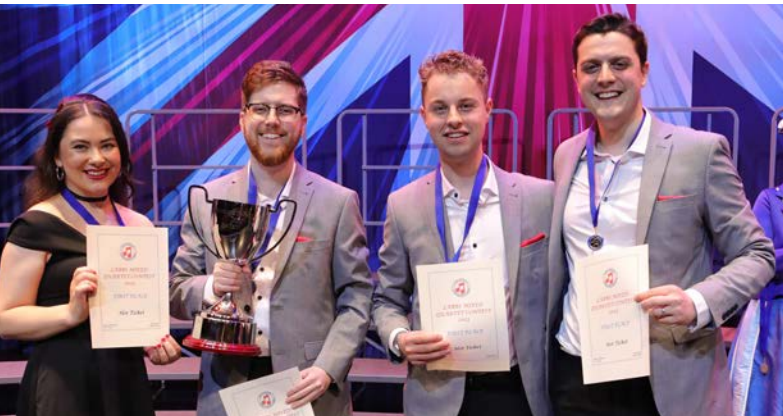
Voice Box

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



Winter 2023 £4

CONVENTION SPECIAL!



Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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Chair's Forward

Hello again, everyone! As I write this, Convention has not long finished and some of you are still coming down from the high of being in the barbershop bubble for a whole weekend. Thanks are due to all those who made our Convention the success that it was, both members of the Board and the many volunteers who ensured things ran smoothly.

It was lovely to see the creative and innovative packages that were presented, and my congratulations go to everyone who crossed the stage, whether in a quartet or a chorus. Thank you for giving us a veritable feast of music and colour. Our thanks too, to BABS' Acting Chair, Shanna Wells, who presented a new trophy on behalf of BABS, for the most entertaining chorus.

LABBS continues to thrive, and we've recently welcomed two more clubs to our Association: [Surrey Harmony](#) and [Six Town Sound](#), both of whom

you can read about in the Club News section of this edition. We look forward to hearing them sing - perhaps on the Convention stage next year!

Members of the Board continue to visit choruses around the country, to meet our members, join in with rehearsals, and to hear all about the exciting things our clubs are getting up to. Don't forget that if you need support or just want to offer an invitation to an event, you are welcome to contact any member of [the Board](#) or a [LABBS Liaison Officer](#).

In addition, I am hosting a 'Chair's Chat' Zoom room, usually on the first of each month, for anyone to come and chat or ask any questions. It's very informal and friendly, and LABBS members are welcome to pop in at any time during the session and stay for as long as they wish. Those who have attended previously have found the sessions helpful and supportive



with the sharing of ideas and suggestions, while others have used it as a way to stay connected to their fellow LABBS members. You can find the dates and times pinned to the top of the [Discussion Forum Facebook Group](#). Do pop in; I'd love to say hello!

Although I'm writing this in early November, by the time it goes to print Christmas will be in full swing. I send my best wishes to you all for a joyous season filled with plenty of cheer, and a diary packed with festive singouts.

**Sue Ranson, Chair
LABBS**

Update from your Editor

What a busy few months I've had

since the last edition of VoiceBox! Between Convention, my work on the LABBS Board, and VoiceBox, there hasn't been a dull moment. What ties all of these things together is teamwork, and I've been thinking a lot about all the different teams I'm lucky enough to work with as a member of LABBS. There's the incredible team of women on the LABBS Board, who are so supportive and really skilled at what they do. There's the M&C team, who work behind the scenes doing all sorts of things, from social media

to the website to the archive, and who were joined by a small army of volunteers for Convention. Speaking of Convention, I also work with the Events Team, headed up by our incredible Events Director, Kristina. That's a team of teams, with all the different spokes of LABBS coming together to create amazing events such as we've just had in Harrogate. There's a VoiceBox team too. I've been lucky to have great support from former editor, Yvette Rayner, who, along with Nancy Philbin, has proof-read every edition. Yvette has recently hung up her proofing boots, and I want to thank her for all she's

done for the magazine over many years. Joining us from this edition is Sara Jackson. Welcome to the team, Sara! Our choruses are teams too. Teams of singers, of parts, of committees. Music teams, costume teams, and performance teams. Our quartets as well, are teams of four, working together to create harmonies. Whatever our individual role in our association, we are, all of us, part of the LABBS team, and that really is something special.

**Mel Baber
Editor, VoiceBox**

The journey to Gold

Barberlicious has been on the precipice

of LABBS quartet success many times in previous years, and although this year felt different as the top few quartets scored so closely at Prelims, we were still squeezing each other's hands and holding our breath as the results were read out. The noise and palpable emotion around us when we eventually got on stage added to the overwhelming blur of hugs, tears, and elation, with our poor LABBS Chair, Sue Ranson, desperately trying to present us with the trophy. It was, and still is, an actual dream come true!

Barberlicious formed ten years ago (an idea born by our bass, Anne-Marie), whilst singing with Crystal Chords. We were quartet novices and barely knew each other, although Bushra and Beck had been friends since medical school. Anna had recently joined the chorus and had no barbershop experience so when we started singing together, we had no idea what we'd sound like! We started out with a five-year plan of rehearsals, performances, and score aspirations. A major help when we set up was the fabulous Pzazz (Monica, Gill, Julie and Sarah), talking to us about repertoire, outfits, finances, registering – all those things you don't really think about when you start up!

A very early coach and special mentor was Jen Mills. She gave us a coaching session after Prelims very early on, and immediately we saw how talented and knowledgeable she was, as well as warming to her dry, self-deprecating humour. She saw the quartet we wanted to be even before we saw it, and gave us the courage and direction to continue when we were at our lowest. We were honoured to be asked to sing her arrangement of Messin' With Fire at the launch of the Jen Mills Award in 2019, along with About Time, the quartet she sang in just before she died. We all still miss her immeasurably, and from whatever jazz orchestra in the sky she was playing with on Friday night, I hope she saw our toast to her.

We've had many coaches over the years, and all of them have offered their expertise and knowledge with massive helpings of encouragement. LABBS has been a constant source of



Barberlicious and Jen

support and expertise with their education weekends, (which have been invaluable), and the infamous Harmony College. We are so lucky to have an association offer such a fantastic range of learning opportunities as well as the national conventions.

LABBS 2023 was a rollercoaster of meeting old friends, swift rehearsals in hotel rooms, and eating warm pre-packed sandwiches at odd times, interspersed with rocketing heart rates, sweaty palms, and abject terror mixed with euphoria. As ever, the efficiency of the Events Team coupled with their positive and helpful attitude made the weekend (seemingly) trouble-free. Big thanks to all involved in the mammoth task of ensuring everyone was where they should be, when they should be.

IN HOUSE guided us perfectly through the evening after we were announced as Champions, and their goody bags contained thoughtful, personal gifts as well as extremely useful ones like snacks – hugely welcomed later that evening when our blood sugar was dropping. After collapsing into bed in the early hours, we were up at 7am on Saturday, ready to rehearse and perform with our beloved chorus, Crystal Chords. Their help, love, advice, and overwhelming support has been the foundation of Barberlicious, and they all hold a very special place in our hearts. We were all delighted with our bronze chorus medal – and the performance trophy (as well as the new BABS Entertainment trophy) was the absolute icing on the cake!

'So what's next?' was the question we were asked most over the weekend. We have a few definite dates in the diary for 2024: BIBA (formerly SABS) in April and BABS in May, and Prelims in June. We'll also be competing on the phenomenal BHS stage in July and are busy [fundraising for our trip](#). We have a list as long as our arm of songs we want arranging, along with the desire to become better barbershop singers, and (although we're not sure this is even possible), better friends.

**Beck, Anne-Marie, Bushra & Anna, Barberlicious
LABBS 2023 Women's Quartet
Champions**



The year our dreams came true

We are ecstatic

to be the LABBS Mixed Quartet Champions for 2023, and what a journey we've had to get there. The 12 months between the Barbershop in Harmony Quartet Contest in 2022, and the LABBS Mixed Quartet Contest 2023, have been absolutely wild!!

We placed second at the BinH quartet contest scoring 75.8%. This gave us the confidence to travel to Holland Harmony in March to try and qualify for the BHS International Quartet Contest, requiring a qualifying score of at least 77% or 1848 raw points. It all came down to the most anxious results call-off in Apeldoorn. When our score was announced - 1848 on the dot! - it became a blur of screaming and running to the stage before the judges changed their minds!

Competing at BHS was surreal, crossing the same hallowed stage as our heroes. The score trajectory continued upwards - 78.7%! It was inspiring to spend a week surrounded by some of the best barbershoppers on the planet and we can't wait to return one day!

Once we'd travelled home and recovered from jetlag, we gave ourselves an ambitious goal of scoring 80% at LABBS - shoot for the moon, and if you miss you'll still land among the stars! We learnt two new songs, including a massive ballad that was very much outside of our usual style. Our trusted coaches - Anthony Colosimo, Jay Dougherty, and Scott Kitzmiller - helped us not just with our musical and vocal skills, but our whole performance mindset, which was key to us believing in ourselves and our abilities.

We were excited to share our songs with the LABBS audience. The risks we took paid off - we received so much warm, kind feedback, especially for our new ballad, Losing My Mind. To be welcomed in by the LABBS community was really special. And the icing on the cake: we achieved our dream score, 80.7%! Thank you, judges and coaches!

We're excited to spend our championship year building our repertoire, performing ([we're available to hire for shows!](#)), and keeping the hard work going. Our dreams just keep getting bigger and we very much plan to achieve them!

With love and gratitude,

**Bethany, Oli, Isaac, and Joe
Hot Ticket**



A trip back in time

...In the smoky ambiance

of a 1930s jazz club, where the rhythms of swing and the allure of speakeasy charm ruled the night, a gripping drama unfolded. Our story revolved around Big Tony, the club's enigmatic manager, and a talented club singer who captured not just the audience's hearts but Big Tony's as well. However, his wandering eye would soon land him in a web of intrigue and scandal...

In a weekend filled with harmonious melodies and vocal brilliance, Cheshire Chord Company were delighted to clinch the gold medal at this year's LABBS convention in Harrogate. Months of meticulous planning and unwavering commitment to our craft culminated in our final 1930's club themed performance.



The journey for Cheshire Chord Company began with a simple seed of an idea, which was carefully nurtured and developed into a show-stopping performance by our fabulous music and creative team. The team's commitment to Cheshire Chord Company played a pivotal role in shaping our performance and ensuring that every aspect was finely tuned.

The LABBS competition saw a multitude of exceptional performances, and it was heartening to witness the diversity of themed packages presented by the other choruses. The stage saw a remarkable display of talent, each offering unique and captivating packages.

In a hotly contested competition, Steel City Voices (directed by our Jo Braham's daughter - Hannah Briggs) secured the second-place position, displaying their exceptional vocal skills and stage presence. Crystal Chords impressed judges and audience members alike, securing the third place with their outstanding performance.

The weekend was a testament to the power of barbershop and the dedication of these incredible choruses and quartets. It was a celebration of creativity and artistic



expression, and a reminder of the joy that comes from the harmonious blending of voices.

As we prepare to take on the role of ambassadors for LABBS, Cheshire Chord Company would like to express our gratitude to the organisation for their support and encouragement.

Representing LABBS, the Ladies' Association of British Barbershop Singers, is a significant responsibility, and Cheshire Chord Company is eager to take on this role.

**Julie Phillips,
PRO
Cheshire
Chord
Company**



What a year!

What a remarkable year we've had as LABBS 2022 Champions. This year has been marked by numerous achievements, exciting opportunities, and memorable experiences that have reinforced our commitment to barbershop singing and our role as LABBS ambassadors.

The highlight of our year was representing the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers at the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) competition. This historic moment made us the first LABBS, all-women's quartet to compete on the international stage. It was an honour to showcase our talent and share the harmonious beauty of British barbershop singing with the world!

Our journey to represent LABBS in the USA would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts from the



UK barbershop community. Fundraising played a crucial role in financing this trip, and we are immensely grateful to everyone who contributed, whether through donations, attending our events, or other means.

In Spring, we had the privilege of attending LABBS Harmony College, an event that provided invaluable insights and coaching. Under the guidance of Kim Newcomb, we experienced an enriching under glass coaching session. Kim's expertise and passion for barbershop music left a lasting impact on our quartet, and we are grateful for the opportunity to learn from such a talented individual.

At this year's prelims, we loved being able to support LABBS quartets and were able to mic warm and cool. It's incredible to see the talent and passion that quartets bring to the barbershop community each year. The competition is a testament to the dedication of all the quartets who participate. Their hard work and musicality make these events truly special and memorable. It's a testament to the power of music and the spirit of barbershop harmony.

In a bittersweet moment that marked the end of our enchanting journey, our final swan song performance of 'Mary Poppins' took place on the Friday



night at this year's Convention. In a showcase of theatrical enchantment, we transported the audience to the whimsical world of Mary Poppins, whilst this year's quartets waited patiently for the results! We were delighted to pass the baton to this year's champions, Barberlicious, in what is their tenth year of competing. Their performance was a testament to the journey they've embarked on as a quartet and the joy they continue to bring to our hobby.

In conclusion, this year has been an exceptional one for IN HOUSE Quartet! We have reached new milestones, learned from the best in the field, and contributed to the barbershop community in meaningful ways. As we look forward to the future, we are excited to continue our journey, spreading the joy of barbershop music, and representing LABBS with pride.

Julie Phillips
IN HOUSE

Shenanigans were had!

Convention continues to be one of the highlights of the year and we absolutely loved everything that LABBS had to offer in Harrogate.

We didn't believe Emma when she read out the Prelims results and said that we'd come seventh, but with four months to get used to that fact, we'd spent the time preparing to give our very



Shenanigans and The Bakewell Tarts

best on the semi-finals stage and were thrilled with the audience's reception and our score of 70.5% with two new songs: That's Life and Next Time I Love.

It was brilliant to watch our quartet soul mates, The Bakewell Tarts, mic-warm in the evening, and we offer huge congratulations to Northern Soul and Muddy Stilettoes for their wonderful medal-winning performances, and to the new champions, Barberlicious, for achieving their dream.

Other highlights included a whoopie cushion infestation, seeing all our friends from near and far who share in this sensational hobby, and being part of Steel City Voices' silver-medal-winning performance. As a quartet, we make a four-hour round-trip to Sheffield every other Wednesday, to rehearse with the most incredible group of women. Hannah Briggs said she'd have been thrilled to have built on our score from



Shenanigans

last year, so to have come away with a five percent increase and five trophies was something really special. Thanks, LABBS, for another brilliant Convention.

Leanne Blaney, Baritone
Shenanigans



EDUCATION 2024



Judging Foundation Course

This course is aimed at anyone who wants to understand more about our judging system.

13th January, Zoom - Intro and Music Category

13th April, Zoom – Performance Category

13th July, Zoom – Singing Category

An additional in-person event will be held on 16th November (details to be confirmed)

Singing Day

For Directors, Assistant Directors, Music Teams, and Quartets

16th March, Coventry

Further details to follow

For more information about the above events, please see www.labbs.org.uk/education

Youth

A love letter to the LABBS Youth Chorus

The LABBS Youth Chorus

has been a huge part of my life for five years. These choruses have provided me with new friends from all over the country, encouraged me to learn more about barbershop, given me the confidence to move to a different chorus, to lead on warmups and even try some directing. On top of this, I was invited to join the LABBS Board, where I have learnt how to lead an organisation. What a journey.

This is a love letter to the LABBS Youth Chorus, and my final shoutout to tell all young women and non-binary folk to join.

My first rehearsal was a four-hour drive away and started with a sleepover with a group of people I'd never met. I was immediately embraced into the fun that is the Youth Chorus, and after just one day together, I knew I had some great new friends here. I also had my first ever performance coaching, where I was both



thrilled and terrified in equal measure! I was hooked.

At my very first convention in 2018, I was introduced to so many new people, thanks to my Youth Chorus friends. I learnt about singing tags, who's who in LABBS, and made more lovely friends.

After another wonderful year in the Youth Chorus led by Boo De Bruin, the opportunity to become the new LABBS Youth Coordinator came up, and as I had very much found my tribe, there was no question about applying. I was so excited to lead the Youth Chorus, and then the pandemic hit. We managed to keep things going against all odds and even recruited new singers, recording a bespoke arrangement of *Into the Unknown*.

The pandemic also marks the forming of Chance Encounters, my (once Youth) quartet who quickly became some of my best friends. Without the Youth Choruses, this simply wouldn't have happened, and I'm so happy it did.

Our younger Youth Chorus membership took a hit after the pandemic, but our Competition Chorus has continued to thrive, thanks to our fun and inclusive culture, where we work hard but often end up in a heap of giggles.



To every Youth Chorus member, past and present, thank you for making the first five years of my barbershop life so fun, supportive, and inspirational. My life has been changed for the better, so thank you.

If you'd like to join the LABBS Youth Chorus (which you really should!), please email youthchorus@labbs.org.uk

I wish my successor, Chloe Cale, success in her new role as Youth Director! She has so much passion for LABBS and barbershop, and already has some great ideas, so I know she's going to do an amazing job.

**Lamorna Hooker, Outgoing Youth Director
LABBS**

Convention 2023: Champs, Trophies, and Awards



Women's Gold Medallist Quartet, Barberlicious.
Recipients of The LABBS Champion Quartet Trophy, The Indigo Blue Trophy, and The Pzazz Trophy



Mixed Gold Medallist Quartet, Hot Ticket



Gold Medallist Chorus, Cheshire Chord Company.
 Recipients of The Brighton Rose Bowl, The Peter Caller Award, and The Music Trophy



Women's Silver Medallist Quartet, Muddy Stilettoes.
 Recipients of The Holland Harmony Trophy, and
 The Crackerjack! Trophy



Mixed Silver Medallist Quartet, Powerhouse



Women's Bronze Medallist Quartet, Northern Soul.
 Recipients of The Guildford Harmony Trophy



Mixed Bronze Medallist Quartet, Jam First



Silver Medallist Chorus, Steel City Voices.
 Recipients of The White Rosettes Trophy, The Red Rosettes Award, The Millennium Award, and The Liverpool Trophy.
 Director, Hannah Briggs, also received The Cheshire Chord Trophy



Bronze Medallist Chorus, Crystal Chords.
 Recipients of The Harmony, Incorporated Trophy, The Westering Trophy, and The BABS Entertainment Trophy



LABBS Youth Chorus, recipients of The Phoenix Trophy



One Accord, recipients of The Harmony InSpires Trophy



Chloë Buck, recipient of The Katy Phillips Young Barbershopper of the Year Award and bursary



Specs Appeal, recipients of The Jen Mills Award



Debi Cox, Recipient of the Chair's Special Award for outstanding service to the organisation.

Convention 2023: Choruses



A Bunch of Roses



Abbey Belles



Affinity Show Chorus



Albacappella



Blackdown Acapella



Bristol Fashion



Cheshire A Cappella



GEM Connection



Harmony InSpires



London City Singers



Main Street Sound



Mountain Harmony



Norwich Harmony



Rhapsody Chorus



Second City Sound



Signature A Cappella



Silver Lining



Spinnaker Chorus



The Belles of Three Spires



The Red Rosettes



The White Rosettes



Welwyn Harmony

Convention 2023: Quartets



Chance Encounters



Fifth & Madison



Flamingo Road



Forfeit



Hat-Trick



IN HOUSE



Instigate



Jabberwocky



Met44



Nightingale



Peridot



Shenanigans



Sonic



Tempest



The Bakewell Tarts



The Rolling Tones



Tickety Boo



Treble in Paradise



Unchained Melody



Yorkshire Blend

Convention 2023

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who donated their bras at Convention - there were 47kg of them! They'll be sorted, and sent to West Africa for onward selling in fair and free trade markets, raising vital funds for Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

Thank you, too, for your donations for Harrogate Homeless Project. Your generosity will make a real difference to those experiencing homelessness in the area.



Putting myself out there

Wow, what a wonderful weekend!

Convention was seriously fantastic, wasn't it?

Although I've been a barbershopper for half of my life, I've only ever seen Convention from a competitor's perspective. This Convention, for a change, I got to experience it from a different perspective: that of a volunteer.

I had needed a bit of persuasion to do it as I wasn't sure there was anything I could usefully contribute, and I can be a bit shy so it would be out of my comfort zone. But, after a chat with M&C Director, Mel Baber (and some cajoling!), I decided to give it a go.

My task was to take photographs on the First Timers Desk and around the convention centre, capturing the magical moments and atmosphere that makes Convention so special. I met so many new people over the weekend; from competitors purposefully making their way to the dressing room or stage, determined to give their best performance; to people arriving at the centre having travelled quite some distance to be part of the weekend; to chatty First Timers who were thrilled to experience a LABBS Convention; and more besides. I found everyone's enthusiasm and excitement infectious – I was beaming all weekend!

I am so glad that I took the plunge and volunteered. It was one of the most rewarding Conventions I've attended. Although I'd always known there was a lot that went on behind the scenes, I never realised quite how much is done by so many people, not only over the weekend but in the weeks and months leading up to it too. To be a part of that incredible team, even in just a small way, was really wonderful.

I won't have as much free time next year, but I'm still going to try and give a little bit of my time to LABBS over the weekend, even if that's just for an hour - it all helps. I'm looking forward to it already!



Sian Netherton
M&C Convention Volunteer

WARNING: If you hate lifts, do not read this!

There are many

definitions for 'lift'. To raise, elevate, hoist up, have a lift in a car, or a face lift. To 'not have to lift a finger' is an expression that means little effort is needed. It could be to lift something as in to pilfer or purloin, to lift your voice in volume, or to raise (lift) someone's spirits or raise (lift) their confidence.

There was plenty of evidence of the latter at Harrogate Conference Centre, both in raising spirits (in both senses!) and of great confidence building across our fantastic chorus, The Abbey Belles, under the direction of our fantastic MD, Catrina. The last time we competed at LABBS was 2018 so it was great to be back on stage, and with 12 first timers and all 35 members on stage at the same time, it was a first for us. The cherry on top was getting our highest ever score and cheering on our quartet, Jabberwocky, who had reached the semi-finals for the first time.

However, let me tell you about my lift saga.

The lift saga began with getting from the foyer to the next level for the dressing rooms - about eight steps. There was a small ramp and then an open lift area to accommodate me in a wheelchair, with Nat, one of our amazing basses, pushing me. After several tries at pushing the

button, the ramp gate would not close to secure us. Competitors passed by up the eight steps, and we laughed as an attempt by security tried - and failed - too. He had to find someone else to come and sort it out!

We were off to the next level - yes! Off we went, but we only got halfway when the light went off and it started jiggling up and down about six or seven inches, with the light then blinking on and off intermittently. Perhaps the lift was feeling the stress of the pending competitions too - who knows? We thought it was funny at first. Nat banged on the door, but everyone had moved on, including our chorus. Someone coming down the eight steps noticed us and (I think), called for someone to operate it from the outside. We eventually reached the correct floor and changing area.

This, however, was only the first of four or five lift problems that day, all in different lifts, although that was the only jiggling incident.

Each lift - and there are quite a few - had various quirks, and some only worked if you had a pass to use them. On the way to the stage, we couldn't get the lift to work so I went up on the escalator and my chair was carried up behind us.

Not the end of the farce! All 35 of



Bernice and Nat, stuck in a lift

us went for a meal in a restaurant with a lift. That too had intermittent problems. Yes, I got stuck in there as well. And believe it or not, when we returned to our hotel, the lift door was opening and closing all the time just like a pair of clapping hands, even before we were near it. Once again, we had to get help.

I will always remember the farcical fun, and a fantastic weekend!

Bernice Haslam
The Abbey Belles



The Abbey Belles First Timers

Amersham finds gold in Ireland

Wow, wow, wow! We just can't stop pinching ourselves after a glittering dream of a weekend at the Irish Association of Barbershop Singers Convention. We are beyond proud and delighted with our solid gold performance!

We started following our rainbow earlier this year with a series of valuable coaching sessions to boost our sound and singing confidence, culminating in a brilliant weekend retreat with the amazing vocal coach Kerstin Greaves, plus the inspirational Performance Coach and LABBS Judge, Kirsty Williams, on hand to help us hone our skills, ready to shine!

The final polish was put on our package with an afternoon rehearsal, followed by a sell-out evening Show, performing alongside the fabulous Knights of Harmony (this year's BABS Small Chorus Award Champs) and the awesome gold medal-winning quartet, Portobello Road.

Less than a week later, we were in Killarney enjoying a fairytale few days filled with magical moments.

Top of our list of gleaming highlights has to be getting up there on the INEC stage and pulling out all the stops to reach our rainbow's end, being awarded a pot of gold medals as the IABS 2023 International Chorus Winners, and bagging the Supreme Champions trophy for the highest score of the weekend as a brilliant bonus.

Also up there is supporting our fabulous five home-grown quartets (featuring no less than ten first-timers), who all did themselves proud in Friday's International Competition.

Then must come our Afterglow Celebrations and keeping the party vibes going until the early hours of Sunday morning, when a few hardy Amersham peeps could still be spotted tagging in full Where's Wally dress-up!

Many congratulations to everyone who crossed the stage over the weekend, especially to the International Silver Medal winners, Luminosity, and to International Bronze Medal winners, Mixed Nuts.

And of course, we can't thank the fantastic IABS team enough, for their hard work behind the scenes to make it a weekend we're still buzzing about.

So, roll on LABBS Convention 2024. We can't wait to put on the glitz and entertain everybody all over again!

Hils Apicella, PRO
Amersham A Cappella



Hybrid success and an invitation!

Following Coast to Coast's decision to become a hybrid chorus, outlined in the last edition of VoiceBox, we're delighted to announce that we've already welcomed five new members! We meet on Zoom twice a month for eight months a year (first and third Sundays), and in-person four times a year in Leicester, for a Weekend Coaching Retreat, a Polecat Jamboree and two live rehearsals. We learn new music as well as polecats. All for £5 per month!

The invitation is to all LABBS members to join us on our Coaching Retreat at the Leicester Hilton on Saturday 24th February 2024. This will be led by inspirational singing coach Simon Lubkowski, with

Coast to Coast's own wonderful Musical Director, Angela Sanchez. There will be two songs to learn and plenty of socialising, with an optional evening meal afterwards. Coaching will be from

10.30am to 4.30pm with unlimited tea, coffee, and water for just £20 per person (£47 with dinner). For those who wish to stay overnight, single rooms with dinner, bed and breakfast are available for £115, or a double room for £180. A snip, really (and there is a swimming pool!).



Coast to Coast, with Simon Lubkowski

Please email membership@singcoast2coast.co.uk if you're interested in joining our very friendly chorus or singing with us on our Coaching Day in February. We'd really love to see you!

Christine Kyriacou, PRO
Coast to Coast

Have you heard? Bristol Fashion Love to Sing!

Convention was

approaching, songs were chosen, and we knew we wanted to step it up and push ourselves towards a new and exciting direction. But, how could we bring together the wonderful sound BF has to offer in a package that was unique, welcoming, relatable, full of warmth and celebration, and a smattering of that BF humour? Cue our fabulous Debbie Trotman and the rest of the Music and Performance Team. Their vision was perfect, and there was no need to search far; the necessary attributes already exist in every Thursday rehearsal, in each 'Love to Sing' course we've hosted (and will again in 2024), in coaching retreats enjoyed, and in performances we've given – it's the BF way!

So, a 'Love to Sing' course complete with newbies was our theme – perfect! After all, it's how many of us found our way



Bristol Fashion: Ready to Tea Party!

into the world of barbershop. Sorry red dresses, stand down! It was hoodies and Ts for this performance and how at ease it made us all feel, even if it did give the stewards a bit of a fright as we were all milling around in our casual walk out gear. 'Come on Bristol Fashion, get a wriggle on – ten minutes!', we were warned. Little did they know, we were ready!

Those nerves we often feel as we enter the stage finding our riser positions were long gone. We were simply with our friends, welcoming a handful of new folks to join the throng of a wonderful song! It really couldn't have felt more comfortable.

We'd like to say that Debbie and Craig's exasperation as we fudged our choreo was new ground, but we think every chorus can relate to that! If only we could all get it right perfectly even third time around. We can dream, right? We whooped (and boomed!) with joy as Sonic appeared, showed the newbies how to sing with style, and welcomed them as fully fledged members of the BF Family.

Our second song could only be 'It's You I Like'. A genuinely beautiful ballad which captures the essence of the barbershop world: a joining of like-minded people who accept and support each other, without question, through the power of song and friendship.



Janis and MD Craig in stage attire

We had a truly fantastic convention. We were so proud of our members who performed with other choruses and quartets, were thrilled to cheer on every person who crossed the stage, and delighted to then join them for the afterglow!

Barbershoppers: don't change! It's you we like, so keep on being you! Now, to the bar!

Naomi Mallinson
Bristol Fashion Tenor and PRO

We're back!

GEM Connection were

glad to be back in the Chorus Competition at Convention this year after an extended absence whilst we concentrated on rediscovering ourselves, following the pandemic.

The GEMs were excited to step out in our brand-new colourful stage outfits to share our fabulous competition package with everyone who crossed the stage during the weekend.

The competition standard seems to rise year by year and The GEMs send our very best wishes to all of our medal winners, both in the Chorus and Quartet Competitions, who we know will be great ambassadors for LABBS. Congratulations and well done everyone.

A huge thank you to all the LABBS

Convention Team, both in front and behind the scenes, for yet another truly amazing Harrogate Convention.

Now we're back to being in the top ten, celebrating with cake and brushing up our Christmas repertoire ready for our Christmas programme of events.

As we say goodbye to our 25th Anniversary Year, we will be looking forward to another exciting year in 2024.

Best Wishes to you all for Christmas, and a happy 2024.

Jenny Smedley, PRO
GEM Connection



GEM Connection, back on the competition stage



GEM Connection's cake

Crystal Chords flying high!

After the most amazing weekend in Harrogate, we are still on a high, polishing our medals and trophies!



Crystal Chords on stage

We leapt out of our seats with excitement when we were announced as winners of the first ever BABS Entertainment Award! We were thrilled to follow this with a Bronze medal, and trophy for the highest Performance score in the competition, making every minute of the balloons, sweat, and tears that had gone into that package, worthwhile!

A huge shout out to the team who made it happen – I am in awe of anyone who can do clever things with a sewing machine, and we seem to have lots of them in our midst! Some made kites,

others sewed linings and covers to enable the transformation from sepia to a riot of colour. We even had a working lamppost on stage! We've been blown away by comments from the audience and we were delighted to have the opportunity to do it all again in the Sunday morning show.

Forty three years on, two founder members, Sue Livesey and Adrienne Brooks, were on stage with us playing a starring role in our theatrical performance, as well as six first timers who all made a fabulous contribution.

The weekend was even more special as both our club quartets, Hat-Trick and Barberlicious, were in the finals. Seeing Barberlicious win Gold was the icing on the cake - we are so proud of you all. And finally, a massive thank you to our own Kristina Mair, LABBS Events Director – she is an absolute legend and has worked tirelessly to make Convention 2023 such a successful event.

Congratulations to everyone who crossed the lovely Harrogate stage to share their performances and make the weekend so memorable – you are all winners!

Claire Hawker
Crystal Chords



Crystal Chords founder members, Adrienne and Sue



Crystals trophies

Mountain Harmony take to the airwaves

Mountain Harmony were on Radio 4

Woman's Hour programme in September this year. Due to licensing issues, the recording wasn't available on the later Podcast but lots of chorus members and their supporters were able to listen to it live – did you manage to hear it?

Four chorus members were interviewed – Nova Evans, Jo Goswell, Sandra Davies and Janice Peterson. As Assistant MD, Nova was able to direct rehearsal for the recording session in Mold. She mentioned how being a member of Mountain Harmony had helped her as she recovered from major surgery following her diagnosis of cancer. She had several tumours removed from her neck and was able to do some of the



Nova, Sandra, Jo and Janice

vocal exercises she'd used to help her voice recover and build the muscles up around her mouth.

Jo is one of the newest (and youngest) chorus members and described how she joined, and what she likes about barbershop singing, plus how she'd like to introduce more modern arrangements to chorus members. Sandra has been with the chorus since 1994 and mentioned her favourite arrangements together with how she loves to sparkle in some of our more glittery stage outfits. Janice then described her audition process and how she got over her anxiety at her first LABBS Convention performance.

Everyone enjoyed doing the recording, and it was good to hear what Mountain Harmony means to some of our members, and how it helped their physical and mental health.

Janice Peterson
Mountain Harmony

The White Rosettes are getting prepped!

How thrilled I was to represent the LABBS Board at a White Rosettes rehearsal back in the summer. I was made so welcome by everyone I spoke to - and I spoke to a lot of people!

The rehearsal started with a physical warm up. After a slight technical hitch, the room was filled with Los del Rio and The Macarena. Everyone found a space in the room and were in full performance mode. On to the risers for the vocal warmups. After two or three minutes the harmonic overtones were spinning everywhere. Sally invited a couple of members who couldn't hear the overtones on the risers to come and stand by her and listen. They couldn't miss them then. One long standing member had never heard the overtones before. She was amazed. On to full performance mode with Rae Watney leading the chorus with talk of giants and giants in sequins (don't ask!) and the performance was taken to another level. This was all still in warm up!

Next up, the body of the rehearsal and Sally gave everyone an opportunity to record themselves whilst she directed the two 2 contest songs that they are taking to the BHS convention in 2024.



Janis and MD Craig in stage attire

Each song was sung twice with no interruptions. It's quite extraordinary that these two songs are sounding so good already and they have a full ten months to polish them before they will sing them to represent LABBS on the BHS stage.

Before we knew it, it was time for the ten-minute 'cake break' which was welcomed by all. The second half was filled with Jane Ford and Fiona Skilling adding full choreography to one of their show pieces. Important questions such as 'Is it a boat or a ship?' were asked.

10pm soon arrived and it was time to finish. Their PRO, Ruth Kirby quickly pulled out her camera to take a photo of me with the chorus. I took another opportunity to have a chat with the head of their fund-raising team, Mig Wharton. She told me they were planning a fund-raising stall for Convention. Somehow, I managed to volunteer to coordinate the knitting team for the event. Well, I don't have enough to fill my days, do I?

**Gail Grainger, Membership Director
LABBS**

Wow! What an amazing convention!

We were singing for the first time in four years, with 13 newbies and two unborn babies on board, and we absolutely loved it. Our newbies were blown away by the love and support of the whole LABBS community, thought the Afterglow was amazing, and were spoiled for choice on who to sing with. They also commented that they didn't realise how emotional it would be, and loved Sing with the Champs and the Mass Sing. I think they may stick around!



Red Rosettes at the First Timers Desk

Fourth overall and second in singing isn't too shabby after a four-year absence, and we were privileged to enjoy such amazing talent crossing the Harrogate stage. As ever, there was excellent

organisation and warm and wonderful back-room support, too.

Congratulations to all the winners but in particular, to the winner of the Katy Philips Young Barbershopper of the Year Award and bursary, Chloe Buck. An award very close to the hearts of the Red Rosettes which was presented with dignity and generosity by Katy's mother Teresa Phillips, our Deputy Chorus Director.

Our MD Emma McManus was 39 weeks pregnant as she directed us in our performance. We were all holding our breath as she climbed on those risers, I can tell you! I have asked her very nicely to present us with our new baby Rosette before the VoiceBox deadline, but as yet she has declined to do so. Prepare for a baby-fest of pictures in the next edition!

I must also pay tribute to our 13 newbies and how they stepped up and sang as if they had been with us for years. A particular mention to Laura who joined us just over a month before Convention and performed with us, and commiserations to Elizabeth who had an accident that week and couldn't sing.



Cath and Lindsey receiving their 10-year certificates

Despite her injuries, she travelled to Harrogate to cheer us on. All such troopers!

As a post-convention treat, all the chorus are going to see Hamilton in Manchester so you never know, next year's package may include a Red Rosettes Rap!

In other news, congratulations to Cath Ganner and Lindsey Carey who have both received their Red Rosettes 10-year certificates.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year!

Life's a song. We sing it.

Ann Atkin, The Red Rosettes

Update: Congratulations to Emma and family, on the birth of Maisie Katherine!

Fascinating Rhythm open memory walk

On Sunday 8th

October Fascinating Rhythm sang in the early morning autumn sunshine at Ashton Court, Bristol, as 170 walkers gathered ahead of a memory walk in aid of FRs charity of the year, St Peter's Hospice.

Hayley Ali, their Events Fundraising Manager contacted FR to say, 'I can't begin to thank you and your lovely choir for performing for us yesterday! You were

absolutely fantastic and added so much to the morning, making it a really lovely and wonderful atmosphere'.

At the end of the walk, tags were hung on the memory tree with touching messages remembering loved ones, highlighting how special the walk was for so many. It's been a privilege to support St Peter's Hospice in 2023.

**Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm**



Singing for St Peter's Hospice

Harmonious finds – Fascinating Rhythm delivers crafts, gifts, and melodies: a well-attended sale delight!

Fascinating Rhythm

created a wonderful event in the bustling town of Chipping Sodbury on Saturday 21st October 2023. The event brought residents together in a delightful celebration of artistry, craft, generosity, and music. The highly anticipated table-top sale saw visitors greeted by a colourful array of handcrafted treasures, thoughtful gifts, beauty products and pre-loved items craft, and was a resounding success.

The event provided a showcase of local talent and creativity. Artisans displayed their wares, including meticulously sculpted pottery, fused glass, handmade Halloween wreaths, hand painted cards, paintings, and intricately woven textile items.

It was the infusion of melodious entertainment that truly set the sale



FR at their table-top sale

apart from others, with fabulous singing performances from the very accomplished Junior FR, Fascinating Rhythm, and the recently formed quartet, Neptune.

The selection of tantalising cakes and wide range of refreshments was

exceptional and certainly enticed a steady crowd of hungry shoppers.

Jo Thorn, Fascinating Rhythm's Musical Director commented, 'What a fantastic day! This was more than just a shopping event, we wanted to bring together people and creativity. We hope we brought a bit of joy to Chipping Sodbury.'

This heartwarming event provided some much-welcomed funds to help Fascinating Rhythm continue finding fantastic music to sing and to help all members attend competitions and events.

**Kate Bishop
Fascinating Rhythm**



Junior Fascinating Rhythm sing at FRs table top sale

A busy time for Harmony InSpires

As you can imagine, Harmony InSpires was elated to score 70% at Convention. Months of hard work and preparation culminated early on the Harrogate stage with a glittering and captivating performance of *Over the Rainbow* and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. The chorus feel excited, inspired, and energised to be singing at a new level and the competition performance has been seen as a personal game changer. Excitement and enthusiasm bubbled over in the afterglow, with chorus members dressed as a string of bunting in keeping with the celebratory 'Tea Party' theme.

Special congratulations to Harmony InSpires' tenor, Chloë Buck, who, to resounding cheers, won the Katy Phillips Young Barbershopper of the Year Award and bursary. They were celebrated for their positive influence on others and personal commitment to singing, as well as for their involvement with choreography, physical warm-ups, and supporting chorus members and their section. Chloë is a much-loved member of the tenor section at Harmony InSpires,



Harmony InSpires MD, Hari, with LABBS Young Barbershopper of the Year, Chloe

involved in singing since the age of ten, and a lynchpin of both their own chorus and the LABBS Youth Chorus. They have overcome shyness, diagnosed as the severe anxiety and low confidence of autism, and in May underwent gender-affirming surgery. At Convention, Chloë sang in the front row, and is a vital and enthusiastic member of the chorus. Chloë is the grandchild of Jan Deakin and child of Lisa Buck, who are both Harmony InSpires members.

Harmony InSpires continues to increase its membership. This quarter we have welcomed Meg, Charlie, Sally, and Caroline. Congratulations to these new members for passing their auditions and for their contribution to Convention.

Preparation for this year's Convention performance and other concerts was supported by recent coaching visits from Sally McClean in late September. We owe huge thanks to Sally's passion and enthusiasm, and it is lovely to see the chorus grow with her care and encouragement.

In early October, Harmony InSpires joined with three local choirs to perform a wide range of music to suit all tastes at St Peter's and St Paul's Church, Wantage. Together with Wantage Glee Club, Wantage Male Voice Choir, and Wantage Sings, they engaged the community with unique, exciting, and dynamic performances which showcased local diversity and talent in a unique and vibrant setting. We were delighted to sing together.

**Rachel Buglass, PRO
Harmony InSpires**



Meg and Charlie



Caroline and Sally



Harmony InSpires on the stage in Harrogate

News from Red Rock

We have had a fab second half of 2023 with lots of local singouts, including winning three trophies in July performing as Red Rock Belles at our local carnival - didn't we do well!

We've been busy with other things too. One of our amazing ladies, Caz, did a parachute jump with some of her colleagues and raised £7,500 for a local charity, Rowcroft. We also had a 70th birthday celebration for our treasurer, the lovely Trisha, with cake on rehearsal night.

During the autumn, Red Rock Acappella was busier than ever learning new songs and carols, while polishing up and perfecting more familiar ones. In November we were proud to participate in Teignmouth's Remembrance Sunday commemorations, and also compete at a Plymouth music festival.

A packed Christmas season featured singouts in and around Teignmouth and Dawlish, including one of our favourite events supporting the RNLI's wonderful Carol Service by the Sea. And, we were very excited to perform over three nights at 'Carols in the Caves', in the magical and atmospheric Kent's Cavern in Torquay.

Wishing a very Happy Christmas to all our fellow LABBS members!



Jayne Trayler
Red Rock Acappella



Silver Lining enjoy Harrogate

Every year we all do the same thing, don't we? But, every year it is so different.

This year many of Silver Lining arrived on the Thursday to enjoy a relaxing time, chilling with buddies, meeting up with friends from other choruses, and some of us also taking part in the sound check. The stage sound and lighting was amazing this year.

We had our photo treasure hunt all set up which entertained us no end. Thanks to

our Chair, Janice White, for thinking it all up. Everything from a man (or woman) with a beard, a fat badger, a ghost, a crown, or our very own Sara with sweets, were photographed over the three days. There were trips to the Turkish Baths and massages booked, and the obligatory trip to Betty's too. I think all together, 20 of us went there!

Our Costume Team had done a fantastic job this year with new sparkly dresses. They were so comfortable, and we felt a million dollars in them on stage. Thank you to Liz, Carol, Rachel, Carole, and

Jacqui for getting us costume-ready.

Our early start on Saturday took its toll, and along with the pouring rain, dampened our evening walk to the convention centre somewhat, but nonetheless, we had a spectacular tea party and did lots of laughing and singing - as you do!

Here's to next year, with the little thing called 'Christmas' first.

**Heather Morton, PRO
Silver Lining**



Some, but not quite all, of the Basses at Betty's



Ladies that do tea in style



Our fabulous new dresses - we love them!



We were all saying 'Souuuup'. If you know, you know! Jean and Liz took it with their usual humour.



Our MD Sara and AMD Jo in the new posh dresses. We couldn't do it without you both

A busy first year for Six Town Sound!

Six Town Sound are really excited to have joined LABBS as new members this year. We've had an absolutely brilliant first year as a chorus and can't wait to see what our future and membership of LABBS has in store for us.



Camper Van - the start of STS

Our chorus had humble beginnings in September 2022. Whilst on a camping trip in their beloved van Renée, Andrea plied Duncan with just enough whiskey to get him to agree to form a ladies' chorus! Luckily, Andrea held Duncan to this and they began to assemble a small group of friends, eventually forming Six Town Sound a few weeks later.

In March 2023 we held our first open event, with the aim of meeting lots of new people and hopefully getting them to love Acapella singing just as much as we do! We gained some lovely new members and had a brilliant time learning some new songs. After a few months of rehearsals and getting to know each other better, we were lucky enough to welcome Steve Scott to our rehearsal night who blew the minds of experienced and inexperienced singers alike, teaching us that the huge variety of our Stokie/Brummie/British accents should be sung out with pride!



Happy Birthday Cake and Welcome Certificate

We celebrated our official first birthday in October this year, with a family and friends event, and of course, cake! We're lucky to have Lynn, our chorus chair, who makes the most excellent cakes, and this was no exception. Guest of honour was Sue Ranson, LABBS Chair, who presented

us with our LABBS member pins and certificate. Thank you, Sue, for visiting us and welcoming us so warmly to LABBS.

Some of our members were able to come to LABBS convention in Harrogate this year and were absolutely blown away by the contests and the brilliant atmosphere. So many kind people welcomed convention first timers - thank you if you said hello! We can't wait to be up there with you all next year.

We've come a long way in just 12 months and can't wait to see where we're going! We're now looking forward to ending our busy year with a free festive open event – [see our Facebook page for details](#). If you or anyone you know is near one of Stoke-on-Trent's six towns, please come and join us!



STS at Convention

Sarah Hughes
Six Town Sound



Joining LABBS, with Sue Ranson



Steve Scott with STS

New friends and a Tea Party!

Spinnaker had six new voices performing with us at Convention this year, and three experienced returning LABBS members, one of whom is a LABBS judge. What an amazing bunch of women they are too! Their voices added depth and diversity into our already established chorus.

Jane, Joanne T, Liz R, Loo, Paula, Sam R, Sarah, Shelley, and Suz have been rehearsing with us for months, learning (or in fact teaching) new techniques to perfect notes, memorising each move and facial expression, practising for hours, listening to teach tracks on repeat until their other half threatens to throw their Android out of the window if they heard that same line one more time - we can all relate, right? It was all worth it though. These ladies seamlessly integrated and found their way to becoming an integral part of the Spinnaker team, who travelled more than 270 miles to be in Harrogate to be part of Convention, overcoming obstacles and delays, and wrestling costumes, props, chairs, and makeup onto a coach or into the back of rather tightly packed cars. We loved every single minute of being together and sharing moments that will be cherished for a lifetime.

Spinnaker members made friends with other choruses at the hotel and in the auditorium, and in other places too, I'm sure. We have forged new memories, strengthened relationships, and enjoyed music that resonated deeply, shared our passion and the boundless joy that comes from creating harmony in music.

Some of our members were eager to dress up and join in the afterglow too, though the White Rabbit kept saying that she was late, and the Mad Hatter went around wishing everyone a 'Happy Un-birthday' which curiously, made the Cheshire Cat smile.

"Entirely bonkers. But I will tell you a secret: all the best people are"

**Liz Waddon, PRO
Spinnaker Chorus**



The White Rabbit (Kathryn), Mad Hatter (Loo), and Cheshire Cat (Ciara). Photo credit: Sue Lindsay.



New members, ready to board the SS Spinnaker. Photo credit: Liz Waddon

The Barberettes sing with pride!

Well done to everyone at Convention. Sorry we couldn't join you this year, but the Barberettes had been invited to provide the finale entertainment at the Pride of Reading Awards ceremony.

Last Friday we sang our hearts out and we were so proud to be associated with this fabulous event. The awards were presented by Chris Tarrant and hosted by Matt Allwright and Mel Blor. Our first song was Good Vibrations and it's no understatement to say that the

audience went mad joining in singing and clapping. This was followed by It's Raining Men accompanied by Danyl Johnson (X factor and Postcode Lottery presenter) who threw himself at our feet on stage. Not the first time Danyl has done this! In March this year Danyl was a judge at the 'Reading Let's sing!' competition. He and the other judges loved our energy and performance, and as a result The Barberettes won (our third win in this competition).

This was followed on Sunday by a standing ovation following our concert to

close the Cramborne Arts Festival. Some incredible memories this weekend and we're over the moon that they've invited us back to open the festival next year!

What an amazing feeling singing with this fabulous, hardworking group of ladies, and we've definitely gained many new followers.

Now we're on to Christmas prep!

**Emma Lelliott, MD
The Barberettes**



Pride 2023 - It's Raining Men



Pride 2023 - with Danyl

Our first medal!

To become LABBS Silver Medallists

is such a huge achievement, but to accomplish that in only our second contest was beyond our wildest expectations. And to win four more trophies alongside that is indescribable!

Most Improved Chorus - We competed last year for the first time, and achieved an incredible fifth place. To be the most improved chorus from such a high standard is a testament to the hard work and passion of all our members.

Most Improved Director - We couldn't ask for a more talented, inspiring, and dedicated director than Hannah. She puts so much work into making our rehearsals the best they can be and we are so grateful for everything she does for us.

Best Midsize Chorus - To achieve the sound we made with only 43 singers on stage is huge. But each and every one of those 43 gave their absolute all - in rehearsals, in their work at home, and in the contest. Although, we'll be recruiting again soon so perhaps next year we'll creep into the large chorus category.

Highest Marks in the Singing Category - We spent a lot of time

this year focusing on our sound and improving our resonance, so to achieve the highest singing score is such an amazing feeling, knowing all of our hard work (and eeeeeaaahhhs, iykyk) paid off.

The support from other LABBS members was immense and we are so grateful for all the lovely comments we received throughout the weekend! Getting the shiny silver medal is nice, but to know that so many people came to support us and cheer us on means the most.

We'd like to extend a huge congratulations to the other chorus medallists, Cheshire Chord Company on their Gold and Crystal Chords on their Bronze, as well as every other chorus who crossed the stage on Saturday! We also had a chance to catch a lot of quartets on Friday, including our girls in Shenanigans, The Bakewell Tarts, and Powerhouse. Congrats to new champs, Barberlicious and Hot Ticket, and every single quartet who performed!

See you next year!

**Georgia Griffiths, Social Media Manager
Steel City Voices**



Hello from Surrey Harmony!

Surrey Harmony is

excited to be joining LABBS and can't wait to meet other member choruses. We've received a really warm welcome from LABBS, and would like to thank [Natalie Feddon for visiting us in September to present our LABBS certificate](#).

Our chorus was founded by Jenny Lawson in 1990 and some of our members have sung with the Chorus since the early years, enjoying the camaraderie and friendship that belonging to a close-knit, fun group can bring. Like a family, we enjoy good times together, and love and support each other in difficult times.

We had a virtual celebration for our 30th anniversary during lockdown and when we emerged from the pandemic, we enjoyed a month of small group singing outdoors before happily returning to full rehearsals in September 2021.

Surrey Harmony loves a convention! We won our first gold medal at the UK Regional Championships for Sweet Adelines International in 1994, and since then, we've won gold on four other occasions and competed at the SAI International Contest a total of seven times. After our founder director, Jenny, retired, Lorraine Turner took up the reins and was director for nine years during which time the chorus won Division AA (mid-size chorus) in 2016 and were placed 5th overall in 2019. We are very much looking forward to continuing our competitive journey as part of LABBS, hopefully winning more medals along the way!

But it's not all about competitions. We love to perform and like many choruses we love to sing for local charities. Our Christmas Concert in 2022 raised over £1,000 for St Catherine's Hospice and we will be singing in support of them again this year at London's Victoria Station.

We are also looking forward to entertaining audiences during the festive season at the National Trust property Chartwell (home of Sir Winston Churchill) and The Tower of London.

Following Lorraine's retirement from Surrey Harmony in December 2022, we appointed a new Musical Director, Penny Homer, who is helping us to continue improving our skills in an environment filled with fun and laughter.

Surrey Harmony love nothing more than sharing our love of singing with our friends. We hope to continue that for many years to come with our new friends in LABBS.

The Surrey Harmony PR team



Sally and Jane

What a year The White Rosettes

have had, with singouts, appearances on ITV and BBC Radio, and a show with other 2022 BABS and LABBS winners. Then, mic warming and cooling at LABBS23 was the icing on the cake. With fabulous singing and imaginative performances, it was a glorious convention. Massive congratulations to the new LABBS Chorus Champions Cheshire Chord Company, Women's Quartet Champions Barberlicious, and Mixed Quartet Champions Hot Ticket, along with silver medal winners Steel City Voices, Muddy Stilettos, and Powerhouse, and bronze medal winners Crystal Chords, Northern Soul and Jam First.

We couldn't end our championship year without celebrating two of the chorus's most influential figures. Without them, The White Rosettes would not have achieved the success we have had following Clive and Sandra Landy's retirement in 1999.

First, Sally McLean, who has been MD for an amazing 25 years. She has led The White Rosettes to win ten LABBS gold medals, three European gold medals, three times Llangollen International Eisteddfod Choir of the Year finalists, and four times Sainsbury's/ Radio 3 Choir of the Year finalists. She continues to inspire not only us; she also shares her expertise with other LABBS, BABS, and European choruses.

Secondly, we celebrate Jane Ford, who has choreographed and whipped us into shape - also over 25 years - for such memorable performances as *Cruella de Vil*, *A Thousand Eyes*, *Drunken Sailor*, *Joshua* and *Puttin' on the Ritz*. Whilst Jane has decided to step down as choreographer and bass section leader after a whopping 39 years, we have no doubt she will continue to advise and support from the risers in the future.

That future, in case you hadn't heard, includes our forthcoming trip to BHS International in July 2024, now only six months away! In preparation for this we have several singouts and coaching days in the diary. There may even be another ITV appearance on the horizon, so keep your eyes peeled!

Ruth Kirby, PRO
The White Rosettes



Jane and Sally

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amersham's 2023 Roll of Honour

Drum roll please! For our trio of Long Service Award Champs, who received their awards from our VIP guest, LABBS Chair Sue Ranson, who travelled down from Lancashire just to do the honours!

First up was Pauline Spiller, for her great 40-year contribution to Barbershop.

Pauline was among the original members of Chiltern Harmony (as Amersham was known then). She said that she was blown away by the sound at her first rehearsal!

Wanting to become more involved during Prelims and Convention, Pauline joined the Music and Judging Committee and soon found herself running competitions at Convention!

Pauline has many happy memories of our chorus and is especially proud of winning the single voice class in

Sainsbury's 1996 Choir of the Year. Now retired, she lives in Plymouth but still follows Amersham avidly.

The second 40-year pin went to our lovely Lead, Sue Wheeler.

Sue started out with the Silvertones in Crawley, joining Chiltern Harmony in 1985.

By 1987, she was singing tenor with Tapestry quartet. In their ten years together, they had some wonderful experiences - including performing at Disney's Epcot Centre for the 1991 Buckeye Invitational, plus winning the 1989 LABBS Bronze medal, the 1990 Silver, and the 1991 Quartet Gold!

Sue still sings with Amersham and lists her top chorus highlights as representing LABBS in New Orleans at the 1992 World Harmony Jamboree, and her first LABBS Gold at Llandudno in 2019.

The 25-year award was presented to our phenomenal MD, Helen Lappert.

Helen joined Chiltern Harmony (now Amersham A Cappella) in 1998 and in 2005 became their MD. Since then, the chorus has won numerous medals including three LABBS Golds, plus International Golds in Spain and Ireland. Helen has also led both Strictly Barbershop and A Kind of Magic to Gold in UK mixed barbershop contests.

She has competed with a number of award-winning quartets including Chordiality, Cheek to Cheek, NoteOrious (LABBS 2008 Quartet Champs), and Mojo. In 2009, NoteOrious performed at BHS Internationals in the World Harmony Jamboree in Philadelphia. This year, she competed at IABS and LABBS - in two different quartets!

Hils Apicella, PRO
Amersham A Cappella



Long Service Award recipients, Sue, Helen, and Pauline celebrating with Amersham A Cappella

Dear Members

As you know, our regular Council meeting was held on 25th November and some important decisions were made regarding gendered language in LABBS' Articles of Association and Annexe 3, our relationship with BABS, and our 2024 AGM.

I would like to thank you all for engaging with the information which LABBS provided prior to the meeting, and for taking the time to discuss these matters with your Council Reps and members of the LABBS Board. My thanks too, to Council Reps for attending the meeting and representing members' views.

The decisions made are as follows:

Special Resolution

Council voted in favour of:

1. Amending the wording of our Articles of Association to:
 - 'Club' means:
 - i. a barbershop club in the United Kingdom having no fewer than nine singing members or*
 - ii. "Club at Large", consisting of individuals who are not members of a Club within the meaning of paragraph (i) of this definition, constituted in accordance with the Charity's Rules;*
2. Amending the pronouns in our Articles of Association to:
 - i. he/she/they in clauses 3.4, 3.6, 14.9, 16, 16.1 and the definition of Connected Person*
 - ii. his/her/their in clause 3.6 (1)*
3. Amending the wording of Annexe 3 to:
 - i. Person in clauses 1 1.1 and 2 2.1*
 - ii. Full club membership of LABBS shall be open to any barbershop club in the United Kingdom having no fewer than nine singing members none of whom may be men (not counting their musical director) in clause 3 3.1.*

I would like to reassure members that none of these amendments are intended to change the fundamental nature of LABBS, and that clubs may define their own membership rules as they wish.

As a result of discussions regarding the above, the LABBS Board will provide some guidance and definitions for clubs.

BABS Relationship

Council voted for the LABBS Board to pause working with BABS on closer and more formal collaboration until BABS' situation is clearer, while continuing existing joint events and other pre-existing combined arrangements.

Council agreed that the LABBS Board can decide when to restart working with BABS on closer and more formal collaboration, without needing to return to Council for formal approval.

Council did, however, request that the LABBS Board be mindful of the following points when making that decision:

- Continued communication and open dialogue between the LABBS Board and LABBS members
- The stability of the BABS Board
- BABS' stated approach to consultation and communication with both their own members and LABBS
- BABS' financial health

The LABBS Board confirmed our commitment to these points.

LABBS AGM 2024

A discussion took place regarding the venue for the AGM and Council meeting due to be held on 23rd March 2024, with Council voting to hold these meetings on Zoom. This represents a significant financial saving for LABBS, and assists the many members of our Association for whom travel to an in-person venue is difficult. This decision relates to 2024 only, and will be reviewed for 2025.

The LABBS Board listened to comments relating to networking which takes place at in-person meetings, and will consider alternative ways that this may be facilitated.

Thank you once again for the time you've given to these matters, and for your continued engagement with decisions which shape the future of our Association.

In harmony,

Sue Ranson, Chair LABBS