

Voice Box

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

Summer 2025 £4



Oh! What's Occurrin'?

Gavin and Stacey join Spinnaker



Plus!

Music festivals, new members and anniversaries

Convention and awards updates

International news with BIBA, EBC and BHS

And more!

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Chair's Foreword

I am privileged and humbled to have been appointed as your Chair at the recent AGM. Thank you everyone, for your support and good wishes. I'd like to pay tribute to all my amazing predecessors who have created and sustained such a fantastic Association of talented women – I fully intend to build on their legacy and to steer LABBS to even greater success as a leading player in the global barbershop community.

A little bit about me - I've sung barbershop for over 15 years with Capital Connection and Spinnaker Chorus and live with my barbershop husband, Mike, in Chichester. I've sung

baritone, lead and a bit of tenor over the years but remain in awe of those of you who can hit those low notes! I took up singing when I retired from a career in the City of London and am delighted to be able to give something back in my new role.

My aim is to provide opportunities and resources to our clubs and members so that we can all enjoy our wonderful hobby to the full and continue to create enduring friendships with each other. The Board is a strong and committed team, and under my leadership we will continue to put members' views, feedback, and ideas at the heart of our decision making.



I am looking forward to the challenges ahead with enthusiasm and positivity and hope to meet as many of you as I can over the coming two years. If you'd like to get in touch, please contact me on chair@labbs.org.uk.

Jill Cook
Chair, LABBS

Update from your Editor



Well hello again! As many of you will know, our VoiceBox Editor, Victoria, had

a baby girl back in March (congrats, Vic!). While Victoria is away taking a well-earned break and spending time with her family, I'll be keeping her editor's chair warm for her.

It's lovely to be back! I do very much enjoy reading all the articles you send, seeing all your photos, and learning about what you've all been up to. Keep 'em coming! You can reach me at the usual address - voicebox@labbs.org.uk.

This edition is jam-packed! From memories of Calpe and prep for Sweden and Denver, to singouts and competitions, to new members and chorus events, plus award and Convention updates from the Board, there's plenty of news from across our association to get excited about. So go pop the kettle on, maybe grab a biccys or two, and get stuck in!

Mel Baber
VoiceBox Editor (Acting)

Deadline for next edition:
Friday 25th July 2025

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: screenshots, or images downloaded from social media pages, websites or message apps are not suitable.*

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

Winter 2025 Deadline: Friday 7th November

Denver adventure awaits!

It's been fundraising full throttle for Amersham A Cappella's Denver adventure, which is now just one month away. From snowdrops to sea shanties, and festivals to a bulging-at-the-seams Bucks village hall, we've worked our glitter off to make our BHS debut the most memorable experience yet.

First up was a visit to the stunning woodland garden of Janet and Norman Bennett, parents of bari Jenny Bennett, whose snowdrop-laden grounds in Chesham draw crowds each spring.

This year Janet and Norman generously donated proceeds from their open day to our Denver coffers. Our set drew many of those braving February's chilly winds, including several passers-by who stopped to peep over the hedge. We were off to a flying start!

Next was our sell-out show at Wingrave, a village idyll in the Chiltern foothills and home to tenor Emily Blackwood. So popular is Emily that every seat was taken long before doors



Sea shanty group Stuns'ls



Claire and Caroline take time out from snowdrop day cake duties

opened. And what a great audience they were, some revealing extraordinary talent when called on to participate.

Audience involvement also featured when sea shanty supremos Stuns'ls travelled from Cornwall to enthuse Chesham songsters and help swell our Denver treasure chest.

Stuns'ls – their name is from stunsail – have sung for King Charles and Queen Camilla, and did so for Visit Cornwall's 2021 G7 welcome video. Their visit was prompted by their popular LABBS workshop in Bournemouth last year. How lucky were we that they should give up a weekend to perform a boatload of hauntingly beautiful songs for our benefit.

Amersham Festival of Music was our final port of call. Once a celebration of classical music, this three-week event now showcases a range of performers. It was our second visit and a privilege to be part of such a prestigious event – a great way to round off our Denver adventure fundraising exploits.

Cath Harris
Amersham A Cappella



Assistant MD Lynne Owen leads AAC at the Amersham Festival of Music

The Light Fantastic Quartet: Our most fantastic year yet

What a year it's been

for us in The Light Fantastic! Since winning gold at LABBS Convention in October, we've been riding an incredible wave of excitement, opportunity, and growth. That win was a dream come true - one we're still pinching ourselves over - but it was also just the beginning of what's become our busiest and most rewarding year so far.

We've been working harder than ever, preparing to represent LABBS on the international stage. Right now, we're focused on two huge events: the European Barbershop Convention (EBC) in Sweden and the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) International Convention in July. It's such an honour to be heading into these competitions, and we're giving everything we've got to be ready.



Smoke Ring and The Light Fantastic Quartet

One of the biggest highlights of the year has been the chance to work with the amazing Smoke Ring quartet. Their coaching has really helped us fine-tune our sound, sharpen our performance, and grow so much as a unit. We've learned lessons from them that will stay

with us for a lifetime. We were also incredibly lucky to be invited to sing on the show hosted by Lux A Cappella. Sharing a stage with such talented musicians was a total joy - and such a motivating reminder of the vibrant community we're part of.

And we're not slowing down! We're really looking forward to heading to BABS Convention in May as guests. It's always special to be part of such a warm and passionate barbershop family, and we can't wait to see friends old and new.

This year has been full of hard work, unforgettable moments, so much music and laughter (and Turkish food!). We're loving every second - and we're so excited for what's still to come.

Emma Wright
The Light Fantastic Quartet

Youth

Junior FR Shine at Thornbury Arts Festival 2025

Junior Fascinating Rhythm (JFR) had a brilliant

showing at this year's Thornbury Arts Festival, performing in the Under 18s Choir Class on 20th March. Their lively rendition of *Wellerman* and a beautifully controlled performance of Billie Eilish's *What Was I Made For* earned them 87 marks and an Honours award.



JFR at Eistedfodd

Adjudicator Anna Marshall praised the group for their energy, musical storytelling and vocal control, commenting on their 'compelling

performance' and 'thoughtfully communicated account'.

The previous weekend saw many JFR singers take part in solo and duet classes. Highlights included:

- Caitlin (*God Help the Outcasts*), Jasmine (*Part of Your World*) and Beth (*This Is Me*) in the Show Songs category.
- Rosie and Jasmine won Honours with 82 marks for their duet *For Good* from *Wicked*.
- Natalie and Beth performed the Friends theme tune *I'll Be There For You*.
- In Pop Solos, Natalie won with *Fireflies*, closely followed by Elsie with *Love Story*.
- Caitlin also shone in the Traditional category with Handel's *Dove Sei*.

A fantastic achievement all round—JFR continue to impress and inspire!

Junior Fascinating Rhythm also entertained the crowds at Iron Acton's May Day celebrations on the bank holiday Monday, delighting crowds with an energetic open-air set. Their lively performance included *Wake Me Up* by Avicii, accompanied by Julie and Paul Macnamara—Julie on ukulele and Paul



JFR at Iron Acton May Day celebrations

on acoustic guitar. Julie, a member of Fascinating Rhythm, is also one of the dedicated adult volunteers supporting the junior chorus.

The talented group also sang *Skin* by Rag'n'Bone Man, *You Are My Sunshine*, *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun*, and the sea shanty favourite *The Wellerman*. Their joyful spirit and polished harmonies were a highlight of the day's festivities, drawing warm applause from the audience of all ages.

Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm

Planning the party

You can never be too

prepared for a party and so since the start of the year, a small subgroup of the LABBS Board have been fervently planning and getting work underway for LABBS 50th Anniversary in 2026.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who completed the survey in 2024, sharing suggestions for how we could celebrate. We had nearly 300 responses and each one was reviewed by the LABBS Board as we grouped and themed ideas to then take forward.

Fifty years of our continually thriving association is a huge accomplishment, and so the whole of 2026 will be used as an opportunity to celebrate not only our past, but also our present and future!

Over the year you can expect to see:

- commemorative pins for all members
- a new polecat for our anniversary year
- Harmony College
- special guests and HC@ Convention during an extended Convention weekend, with the opportunity to 'pre-glow' and watch guest performances on Thursday evening, as well as a significant show on Sunday morning
- social media 'baton' passing as we showcase as many groups as wish to, in singing 'Happy Birthday' to LABBS throughout the year
- grants to be provided for clubs and local groups to celebrate our anniversary
- opportunities to nominate the people who have inspired and contributed to LABBS over its 50 years
- memorabilia to purchase



It's sure to be an amazing year and we want everyone to be a part of it, so keep your eyes peeled and ears open as we share more information.

Alison Liddell
50th Anniversary Coordinator, LABBS

Reaching and Welcoming New People: A Making Music course

I can thoroughly

recommend the Making Music Courses. Most of them are on Zoom, they're often free, and the quality is great. I attended this course recently, and we considered topics including ensuring that all are made to feel welcome at events or rehearsals, and including people equally so they feel they want to stay.

Looking at reaching new people, we can do this in the same way as marketing something. We considered questions including "What are you inviting people to?" and "Who are you?", being clear about your group and activity. Are there cultural barriers? Is everyone invited, and who is missing?

Consider writing an accessible invite to events such *Love to Sing* courses, using an inclusive design with suitable font/colour/background. Also think about content being in plain language, expressed in neutral identity. Put information in text not in images so it's easy to see in all formats. If you're

offering a point of contact, can this be by phone and/or email, or is there a contact form on your website that's regularly monitored?

Looking at how we recruit new members, consider having workshops or short-term special events leading to a concert, which could be a fundraiser for the chorus or for charity. Maybe take part in community events or collaborative projects.

When welcoming people, be honest about what's involved. Consider if you can help a new member with learning skills. Can you adjust the audition process to improve accessibility? Could you have a buddy system, pairing up an existing and a new member?

Also consider a welcome pack including items such as how to communicate with a key person, asking for consent for photos to be used on social media, and maybe include the structure of a rehearsal evening, including times and break times, and whether they need to bring anything.



If you have an event where you're expecting new people to attend, have someone to meet and greet. The same person or people could then check at the end of the session whether attendees enjoyed themselves and if they have any questions.

Hopefully this gives you some ideas and inspiration, and a few things to think about.

Kate Middleton
Director of Diversity and Inclusion, LABBS

New 'Club in the Community' Award

I'm delighted to announce the launch of a new award open to all LABBS clubs to recognise their role in their community.

We know how many clubs contribute significantly and consistently to their local community – it's very much part of our shared culture – and we want to acknowledge that by making an annual award (with a trophy!). We already have lots of awards for our singing, performing and directing abilities. This new award will demonstrate our belief that - just as importantly – barbershop singing brings joy and education to community audiences and supports local causes.

We will be asking for your nominations for the award later in the year, with written submissions being considered by a small panel in early 2026. The submission will need to set out the work done by your club in the community, either as

a one-off project or a series of events or activities over the preceding twelve months.

The list of activities considered is not prescribed or exhaustive, but examples might include:

- working with local charities to raise funds/awareness
- workshops with local schools to educate and share singing experiences
- singing to audiences in care homes
- relationships with other specific singing groups (e.g. dementia patients).

We know there are so many great examples out there! We look forward to making the inaugural award at the face-to-face AGM in our 50th anniversary year on 28th March 2026.

Jill Cook
Chair, LABBS

Just so you know: Convention 2025 update

I have just given myself a shock as the calendar informs me that, as I write this article, it is 27 weeks until Convention (less by the time you read this!). Goodness. Time is flying by and there is still so much to achieve in order to be ready at the Harrogate Convention Centre for all things barbershop.

There will be some changes during Convention weekend this year, and I'd like to share with you why that is.

Imagine the Convention centre as an empty space. Every area used over Convention weekend is individually charged and it costs £68,604 for the minimum required space, without putting anything in it. Then we have additional, essential costs: stage build, including rigging sound and lighting, backcloth, and all sorts of smaller but no less important items; technicians to operate sound and lighting, to make sure your performances sound and look their very best; audio and visual recording and editing to high technical specifications so that you are able to watch yourself and your friends, and are able to analyse your performance in as much detail as you need. Furniture is also charged for: every chair and every table costs £14.40 each. We also have to pay for electrical sockets at £117.60 per socket.

Dressing areas are also expensive. We need to offer the following areas for those crossing the stage: womens, mens, gender neutral, and under 18s. We also provide three warm-up areas. This costs a huge amount as you can imagine. The women's area alone costs £11,520 plus furniture (this is a preferential rate as

we're regular customers!). The Queen Suite costs a further £7,200 plus the cost of any furniture, which accommodates the three warm-up spaces and the remaining dressing areas we need.

It is useful to know costs and to understand that with each year that passes, it is increasingly more challenging to ensure Convention breaks even while still keeping the cost of registration as low as we can for you. We must reduce the overall bill this year though, and looking at the space we use is a good starting point. We do want to avoid reducing the space you use for socialising and afterglowing, because that is such a big part of Convention for so many of you. Nor do we want to reduce space available for HC@Convention that so many of you really enjoyed last year. Instead, we are going to use dressing areas more efficiently.

With that in mind, from this year we'll be moving the women's dressing area from Studio One to the King Suite (below Hall D). King Suite has excellent access with both lift and escalator up to the warm-up area of Queen Suite. It's less walking, but a much smaller space. King Suite will cost £7,200 (plus the furniture of course!), saving us £4,320. It's not a huge reduction in the overall scheme of things, but this change will help us achieve our objective of breaking even and avoiding huge registration price hikes.

Because the space is smaller, we will need all performers to think smaller. There is absolutely no space for a dress rail: please don't bring one because you will be asked to dismantle it.

It's not all downsizing though! As you will no doubt be aware, there will be a greater number of awards this year. They will take longer to distribute so to ensure that you have time for an evening meal, the Saturday Show will start at 8.30pm. You can read more about our new awards structure on page 7.

Another addition to the weekend, which we started last year and which received such positive feedback, is HC@Convention. There will be plenty of sessions for you to participate in, and we are looking forward to sharing the programme at the end of June so you can begin to plan your Convention weekend.

There will be more news and information to share with you as the weeks tick down, so do remember to check LABBS [social media](#) and [website](#) for the latest updates.

The Events Team are really looking forward to welcoming you all to Harrogate in October, and seeing your firework-themed costumes! Get the giddy meter going!

Kristina Mair
Events Director, LABBS



New Awards Structure

Following feedback, we have made some changes to awards for choruses and quartets.

The chorus changes will recognise and reward more choruses for their achievements.

The quartet changes bring the Women's and Mixed in line, with new trophies for silver and bronze Mixed Quartets. All other quartet trophies will be awarded across Women's and Mixed Quartets - please see the table below.

Full details of all awards and trophies are in the *LABBS Contest & Judging Handbook 2025* which can be found by following the link on the LABBS website, here: <https://www.labbs.org.uk/contest-rules> (pages 43-46, inclusive).

Alison Thompson

Education Director/Education & Judging Committee Chair, LABBS

Quartet Awards

Womens	Mixed
Gold – trophy and medals	Gold – trophy and medals
Silver - trophy and medals	Silver - trophy and medals
Bronze - trophy and medals	Bronze - trophy and medals
Trophy for the Highest marks in Musicality	
Trophy for the Highest marks in Performance	
Trophy for the Highest marks in Singing	
The Novice Quartet Trophy Awarded to the highest scoring Novice Quartet at Prelims	
The Youth Quartet Trophy Awarded to the highest scoring Youth Quartet at Prelims	
The Senior Quartet Trophy Awarded to the highest scoring Senior Quartet	
University Quartet Award Awarded at Prelims to the winner of the University Quartet Contest	

Chorus Awards

Gold, Silver and Bronze trophies and medals will be awarded in the usual way.

Most Improved in each Category

The category awards (Musicality, Performance and Singing) will be changed from being awarded for the highest score in each category to the most improved in each category. This will be calculated on points improvement rather than % improvement of previous score. Certificates will be awarded for 2nd and 3rd places for each category.

The highest scores in each category will be announced but not receive a trophy.

Most Improved Overall

The overall most improved will be calculated on points improvement rather than on % improvement as it was previously. Certificates will be awarded for 2nd and 3rd places.

All 'Most Improved' awards are based on consecutive year's contests.

Small Chorus Award

The Small Chorus award will remain, awarded to the highest scoring group with up to 25 members on stage including the MD.

Division Awards

We are changing from awarding trophies based on the number of members on stage, to a divisions-based approach. Divisions will be assigned on the most recent LABBS score from the last two years. A group that has not competed for two years will be assigned to Division 1.

The chorus from each division that scores the highest, will be the winner of that division. Divisions will be reassigned each new contest cycle.

The score boundaries we have chosen are based on the scoring bands we use on our forms. On current scores, that means roughly equal numbers in each division:

- Division 1: 74% and over
- Division 2: between 67% and 73.9%
- Division 3: up to 66.9%

Spanish travels and Northamptonshire trophies

Two quartets with strong Amersham A Cappella links

graced the stage in the spring. Cartet, formed in 2023, took on some of the world's best at BIBA en Armonia international contest in Spain. Later in April, seasoned quartet Something for the Weekend were triple trophy winners at an event closer to home.

Cartet, comprising Amanda, Tracey, Helen and Di, conjured their quartet



L-R: Sarah, Ali, Justine and Caroline of triple winners Something for the Weekend

name from their shared travel to AAC rehearsals. BIBA was their second international barbershop quartet competition.

They thoroughly enjoyed themselves, soaking up the amazing singing from top international quartets, and of course sampling the local cuisine and wine.

Highlights included afterglow singing with Spanish choruses Spangles and Barbees, both three-time national champs, and meeting up with friends from LABBS and IABS – including Catherine Lyons and Ursula Mulvihill – where Cartet first performed two years ago.

Meanwhile, Something for the Weekend's Sarah, Caroline, Ali and Justine swept the board at the North Northamptonshire Music Festival's barbershop day, another brilliantly organised event.

They were competing against quartets and a chorus, their three songs earning victory in the Female Barbershop



L-R: Helen, Tracey, Di and Amanda of Cartet, performing at BiBA in Spain (Photo credit: Eric Ideler)

Quartet, Open Barbershop Quartet and Barbershopper of the Year classes.

They too mixed and mingled and among other contestants were groups preparing for Sweet Ads. At the time of writing, Something for the Weekend are also due to debut several new songs informally at BABS, after the Association's competitions at the end of May.

Cath Harris
Amersham A Cappella

A little bit of what you fancy does you good!

Well, do you fancy it?

I couldn't believe what was said: 'Jo, would you like to have a go at quartetting?'. I had joined Bristol Fashion chorus in Summer 2023 and was instantly hooked. My barbershop journey started as a baritone and then switched to lead for my first LABBS Convention in Bournemouth 2024. It was an epic experience for BF and I knew then that I wanted MORE! The next morning, following a fabulous day, the question was popped.

Of course, I said yes! Debbie Penfold (awesome mother-hen, bass singer and Sonic medalist!) kindly offered her library of Songbirds arrangements for us to try. Debbie is a huge advocate for promoting barbershop and giving people the means to try quartetting songs she has kindly purchased. So, me (Jo), Kath (bass), Lucy (tenor) and Lynne (bari) got together to hear how we sounded. I was nervous! But my BF family and these three ladies gave me the confidence I needed to stand front and centre. We had a blast at our four rehearsals before our first 'singout' for our BF peers. After

listening to some very accomplished quartets go before us, it was our turn. Jekyll was called to the stage to perform!

I'll be honest, it was a bit of a blur. But once the voices started it just flowed and I was enjoying myself! Then came the lead predominant section. We had planned for me to take a little step forward but my feet were firmly stuck to the floor. Until, that is, Lynne gave me the softest of nudges on my back to help me along. It was all I needed to really allow myself to show off my voice and our hard work together. I loved it! It was only later that we realised that for Kath (a decades-seasoned pro at barbershopping around the world), had also never performed in a quartet - I was so proud of us.

What did I learn? Do what excites you no matter where you are in your journey, surround yourself with supportive friends and a safe environment, and most of all, have fun! I'm sure this won't be the last time I quartet with lovely ladies from my BF family.

Jo Deane, Lead
Bristol Fashion Chorus



Jekyll: Lynne, Kath, Jo and Lucy

Genre and Inclusivity Event

On 25th February, OutsingCancer and Making Music

invited representatives from local choirs to a Genre and Inclusivity event, to share and sing together. Arun A Cappella have had some challenging issues to face recently and decided it would be good to send some representatives. Four of us went along, who just happened to be the chorus quartet, Catra.

The event was brilliantly led by OutsingCancer Choir's MD, Andre da Silva, who taught us some new warm-ups and introduced us to new

songs. We had group discussions, sharing challenges to recruiting and inclusivity which not only highlighted similar experiences, but introduced us to new ideas to use in our own situations.

Catra was invited to sing at the end: we had a great reception! OutsingCancer also made a [YouTube video](#) at the event which features an interview with our very own June Bryant, founder of our chorus.

Val Dock, Baritone
Catra and Arun A Cappella



IN HOUSE Quartet: Tea, Tunes & Sweden Dreams

If you've been wondering

what IN HOUSE Quartet has been up to lately, the short answer is: everything. From intensive rehearsals and unforgettable coaching sessions, to packing bags (and snacks) for Sweden, at the time of writing we're in full-on prep mode for the European Barbershop Convention this May in Helsingborg!

Six Years of Singing and Smiles

Before we jumped into the madness of May, we had to pause in February to celebrate a pretty special milestone... Happy 6th Birthday to us!

It's hard to believe it's been six years since our very first singout (and of course, our first obligatory post-sing selfie). Since then, we've had the most incredible journey: singing at amazing events, meeting lifelong friends, and learning more than we ever thought possible. From day one, the love and support from the barbershop community has meant the world, and we're so grateful for every step of this wild ride.



Back to the Scout Hut

Our rehearsal haven – the humble scout hut – was buzzing again at the start of February as we got stuck into a full day of prep for Europeans. There was tea. There was sugar. There was sheer willpower. Every note counted as we worked through our contest set, making sure every chord locked and every move meant something.

April Adventures: Coaching & Connection

April's been an absolute whirlwind – in the best way possible. We had an amazing weekend of rehearsals and were lucky enough to be coached by the wonderful Kirsty Williams, who brought energy, insight, and a whole lot of sparkle to our performance.

That same weekend, we joined Hallmark of Harmony during their retreat – and what a treat it was! Watching (and hearing!) their singing was such a joy. Of course, we couldn't resist jumping in with a little tune of our own. A true barbershop moment.

And just when we thought it couldn't get any better, we had another amazing coaching session with



Nancy Kelsall, who helped us put the final polish on our Europeans package. Nancy, you're an absolute star – and we were cheering you on with Heartbeat Chorus in Helsingborg too!

Sweden, Here We Come!

It's hard to believe the big moment is almost here. With just days to go (at the time of writing!), the adrenaline is high, the harmonies are tighter than ever, and yes – the packing lists are mostly under control.

We're beyond excited to represent LABBS on the European stage, and we couldn't be prouder to stand alongside so many brilliant British choruses heading out to Sweden. Let's show Europe what we're made of!

Julie Phillips
IN HOUSE

Happy 10th anniversary to us!

I don't think any of us thought that 9-5 would still be flourishing and entertaining the people of Bristol, 10 years ago in February, when we formed 9-5 Ladies Harmony Chorus!

We have lost a few members over the years but are still attracting singers of maturity who are looking for something worthwhile to occupy them after retiring from work or a more competitive singing group. It just goes to show that singing has longevity and provides friendship

and fun as well as health benefits and the satisfaction of being appreciated by wider audiences.

We have members like our two Vals and Kay, who have completed 125 years of singing between them. We also have Toni and Denise who joined us in recent years, and Jan who was looking for a local singing group and found us through Denise!

We celebrated our 10th anniversary by visiting a local garden centre that

provided scrumptious afternoon teas, and we also took time to sing to other customers!

We sing regularly at local retirement homes and retirement clubs, as well as for Rotary and other charitable causes.

We are always pleased to have visitors and welcome those who wish to join us.

Jill Zimmer
9-5 Harmony Chorus



9-5 at the garden centre



Denise receiving her LABBS welcome letter and pin.
L-R: Mary (Chairperson), Joyce (Membership and Singouts), Denise, and Jenny (MD)

Belles at BIBA 2025

I don't think any of us thought When our fabulous secretary Lesley suggested a couple of years ago that we must go to BIBA, we didn't realize just how right she was! What a weekend!

The planning and preparation was definitely worth it for a magical



Enjoying the sun in Calpe

weekend together enjoying barbershop, sea, sand and sunshine with our Belles sisters! Who could ask for more?

But more we got as we also achieved our highest scores in all categories and placed 5th overall. We enjoyed every second on that fabulous stage and even so early in the morning, we had a fantastic audience with a great vibe.

The whole event was brilliant, with great opportunities to listen to so many other quartets and choruses. We were so proud again to watch Tempest Quartet do so well and place as mic warmers for the finals on the Friday night.

Thanks to [BIBA En Armonia Convention](#) for putting on a fantastic convention, we loved every minute and will be back!

Emer Scott-Baird, Vice Chair
The Belles of Three Spires



The Belles of Three Spires

Celebrating 50 years of Avon Harmony

This year, Avon Harmony is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Founded in 1975 with just nine members, it is one of the three founder choruses of LABBS. This is an exciting year for AH, which is already bringing a lot of joy to the chorus. We started off the year strong with a *Love to Sing* course, learning two new songs in six weeks to beat the January blues. These songs were new to us all so that we could show prospective members what we do and how we do it, always as a team. The course gained us

an impressive six new members, with more in the pipeline! We are so pleased to have them on board and to see them fitting in so well with the chorus vibe.

More recently, members have celebrated in style with a 70's themed party. This involved many ABBA tunes, and we showcased one of our new *Learn to Sing* songs: *Take a Chance on Me*. We also sang a polecat to unify our members, past and present: *Anthem*. We had great fun and it is clear to all of us that the support and friendship we share provides a community we are proud to

be a part of. We thank our MD, Mary, for her endless enthusiasm for our group, and our chair, Jenny, alongside other committee members who have worked hard to give us lasting memories and ensured fun and success. The rest of the year holds a new logo and t-shirts for us, a founder chorus workshop, a 50th anniversary concert, and a reflection on the past 50 years of women in Bristol finding escapism and harmony in barbershop.

**Sophie England, PRO
Avon Harmony**



Avon Harmony: Past and present members

Lots to celebrate for Chorus Iceni!

Chorus Iceni have had a nice, busy start to 2025.

Following our three week *Come and Sing* course, we have seven newbees: Karen, Katrina, Lou and Nina who have joined our lead section, Frances

who joins the baritones, and Xanthia and Carol in the bass section.

We were also part of the most amazing concert with the London Welsh Male Voice Choir at the beginning of April at the Mercury Theatre in Colchester. It was held to raise money for Lizzie's Fund - a charity which funds research into childhood brain tumours. The event raised a staggering £51,000.

Although Chorus Iceni will not be competing in Harrogate in 2025, we have singouts planned and we are all looking forward to our first ever retreat in the autumn.

**Mandy Miller
Lead section and Social Media
Chorus Iceni**



Welcome to our newbees!



Raising money for Lizzie's Fund, with London Welsh Male Voice Choir

Bristol Fashion's outstanding day in Bath!

A beautifully crisp, blue-sky March day and Bristol Fashion just had to make the most of singing in Bath's Mid Somerset Festival. This prestigious festival started in 1902, and Bristol Fashion were thrilled to be competing at one of the UK's largest and longest running festivals again!

We'd be taking to the stage to compete in two classes – Female Voice and Popular Songs - knowing that the competition was stronger than ever. The venue was filled with the nervous but excited buzz of voices, and while we can spend much of our time in our Barbershop Bubble, singing in these festivals allows us the pleasure of hearing other vocal styles and watching singers enjoy their craft with as much passion as we do. Andover Ladies Choir, The Philomel Singers, Monkton Community Choir, Courage Choir and of course some local Barbershop friends, The Bristol Mix and Black Sheep Harmony were all truly inspiring!

But what to do betwixt the 10am and 3pm classes? Never

ones to shy away from a photo opportunity, our beautiful blue convention outfits and sparkles (too lovely to sit in a wardrobe until October!) were treated to a cultural gad about town. From the towering Medieval Spires of Bath Abbey to the iconic Georgian Royal Crescent, to the bustle of the cobbled streets and arcades (don't forget to shhhhhh on Quiet Street!), and the elegance of the Roman Bath Spas, Bath is brimming with wow factor around every corner!

And talking of wow factor (we certainly were wowing at our new BF members Ethyl and Hilda), there was glorious silverware to be taken home for 'Outstanding' wins in both classes, and not even a rogue mobile phone could put us off!

Of course, it's brilliant to win, but brilliance is shining a light on the unique and visually engaging world of barbershop singing to new folk, whilst enjoying time laughing together as a chorus!

Naomi Mallinson
Lead and PRO Team
Bristol Fashion Chorus



Getting back on track

February saw the start of our preparations for LABBS Convention. We held a weekend coaching retreat in the beautiful venue of Cliff College at Calva in Derbyshire. We worked hard at putting together the songs that we will be performing in Harrogate at the end of October, with the fabulous Sally McLean as our coach for the weekend. On Saturday evening we held a Murder Mystery Night which was great fun.

Would you believe that Sally's team won? I must say though, that she is much better at coaching choruses than solving a murder!

In March, we held our 'Be A GEM For A Day' event, called 'Is the Rhythm Gonna Get You?'. A number of ladies came along and enjoyed a fun day with all the GEMs learning and performing the great song by Gloria Estefan, *Rhythm Is Gonna Get You*. It was lovely to see two ladies

return to our next rehearsal with a view to joining GEM.

After taking a year away from LABBS Convention in 2024, we are very much looking forward to being back on stage in Harrogate this year, and seeing you all again.

Jenny Smedley, PRO
GEM Connection



Murder Mystery Night:
Who's that lurking in the centre of the back row?



GEM Connection

Coast to Coast's Retreat

In early March, shaking off those winter blues, Coasties and friends, with live-streamed support from members unable to travel, once again enjoyed a fabulous weekend of singing and friendship in Leicester's Hilton Hotel.



Participants at the retreat

Unfortunately, Coast to Coast's wonderful MD, Angela Sanchez, came down with a stonking cold on the morning of the retreat. Happily, assistant MD Kate Ellis stepped into the breach to support top coach Simon Lubkowski who led the weekend with his usual insights, encouragement and good humour.

And what a weekend! Angela's choice of music, Bob Dylan's beautiful *To Make You Feel My Love* arranged by Joey Minshall, Fleetwood Mac's optimistic *Don't Stop* arranged for barbershop by Larry Wright, and Phil Everi's spirited *When Will I Be Loved?* were perfect vehicles for Simon's coaching which included breathing technique and sound production, singing style and blending, and expression and performance.

With tags, old and new, polecats, bar and pool, we all went home invigorated and abuzz with renewed enthusiasm for our amazing hobby.

Coast to Coast, based in Leicester, is LABBS' only hybrid chorus with live and online rehearsals. We always welcome new members and are particularly and uniquely valued by those who cannot travel to rehearsals.

Anne Withnall, the chorus's excellent membership secretary, was for many years a familiar figure in Convention foyers where she sold LABBS raffle tickets. Anne is no longer able to travel to rehearsals for family reasons, but really appreciates continued membership of the chorus. She comments: 'It's marvellous to keep up



Simon Lubkowski and Kate Ellis

active engagement with barbershop and to sing wonderful arrangements with screen buddies. Thoroughly recommended!

An absolute bargain at £5 per month! Please send enquiries to membership@singcoast2coast.co.uk

Christine Kyriacou, PRO
Coast to Coast

Fun, fellowship and the feel-good factor for Velvet Harmony

Singouts are always good for the soul but Velvet Harmony is enjoying the afterglow of a particularly special and rewarding one. We were contacted by our local Disabled Christians Fellowship, which offers support and friendship to disabled adults and their carers, through monthly meetings. We were engaged to entertain them at their Easter get-together and what a joyful occasion it was! Music has the ability to touch everyone and the reaction of our audience was so heart-warming.

Our talented Musical Director, Nat Vesty, got us started with a sea shanty and encouraged the audience to clap along, and it set the tone for a truly shared experience between our audience and us. Our repertoire was pretty varied but Nat's introductions were perfect for settling the audience for the softer songs and encouraging participation for the more upbeat numbers, such as Pharrell Williams' *Happy* and Abba's



Velvet Harmony at the Disabled Christian Fellowship

Dancing Queen. We were buoyed up by clapping, singing along and, for our final song, some playing of percussion instruments by our audience. Nat even taught them a couple of rounds, which they participated in brilliantly and we had the whole room singing. It was fabulous!

At the end, we sang our barbershop version of *Happy Birthday* to a lady whose special day it was and we were thanked by people with smiles on their faces and Easter bonnets on their

heads! A tea party followed and we were touched by the stories the carers shared and the warmth we were shown. It was just one of those days which was so much more than we were expecting, and so rewarding. It did wonders for our confidence as a chorus, too. If you have a Disabled Christians Fellowship near you and would like to sing for them, we can highly recommend it!

Davina Burgess, LABBS Rep
Velvet Harmony

Cheshire Chord: Singing, Climbing, and Soaring into 2025

What a start to the year it's been for Cheshire Chord!

Between singing our hearts out, climbing literal mountains, and preparing for the international stage, there's been no shortage of excitement, laughter, and hard work in our chorus.

Singing for Samaritans

Back in March, we had the joy of performing in a concert to raise money for Samaritans, and what an incredible evening it was! The room was buzzing with energy, and it felt amazing to come together for such a good cause. Thank you to everyone who came along, supported, and sang with us. Your generosity and love made the night truly special.

Rehearsals, New Music & Big Dreams

In February, we had a fantastic day of rehearsals as we got stuck into our two brand-new songs for our upcoming competition in Denver this July, with some fantastic coaches! They're really starting to come together. Emma Shanks helped guide us with so much skill and encouragement, and we're all feeling really inspired by her coaching expertise.

Then, in March, we had another brilliant

day of coaching, this time with the amazing Sean Devine. His focus on performance and preparation was just what we needed as we count down to Denver. We're learning so much and feeling more prepared (and excited!) than ever.

Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge – Here We Come!

As if rehearsing for an international competition wasn't enough, some of our amazing members are taking on the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge on Sunday, 11th May. That's 24 miles, three mountains, and a whole lot of determination. We're currently deep in training – physically and vocally – and every step we take is bringing us closer to Denver.

This opportunity to represent our chorus on the international stage is something we've dreamed about for years. It really is once-in-a-lifetime. But we need a bit of help to get there. If you're able to sponsor us, you won't just be supporting a singing group – you'll be helping make dreams come true.

A Huge Thank You to Sue Ranson

We also want to take a moment to say a



massive thank you and congratulations to Sue Ranson, who recently wrapped up her role as Chair of the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers after two incredible years. Her dedication, leadership and passion have inspired so many of us, and we couldn't be prouder. Sue, you've made a real difference, and we're so grateful for everything you've done.

So here's to a year of music, mountains, and making memories. Whether we're on stage or out on the hills, Cheshire Chord is moving forward with big dreams, big harmonies, and even bigger hearts. Thank you for cheering us on – we can't wait to share what's next!

Julie Phillips
Cheshire Chord Company

Hello from Mayflower A Cappella Chorus!

A note from us - LABBS' newest members, Mayflower A Cappella Chorus - with a fun challenge: how many songs can you spot that are in your repertoire too?

There was a feeling in the air at rehearsal that a change might be required. We often sang 'Can you Feel The Love', but love seemed aloof. And so the Mayflowers began their search for a renewed sense of belonging and an injection of enthusiasm. But how would this come about? 'Come Fly With Me'...



Mayflower A Cappella Chorus celebrating joining LABBS

It began with a visit from LABBS Marketing Director Mel Baber at a Mayflowers rehearsal night back in September 2024. Mel gave us an idea

of what LABBS could offer to a small chorus of 40 members. After being prepared to look 'Beyond The Sea' from Plymouth, the Mayflowers were intrigued and wished to find out more.

In October, 10 of our chorus members attended LABBS' Convention in Bournemouth. Accomplished Mayflowers quartet, Carousel, and one Mayflower who sings in Gin-Centive quartet, performed at the competition, and all members thoroughly enjoyed the convention experience. They returned to Plymouth 'At Last' at our Monday night rehearsal, with a new spring in their step and beaming 'A-HA' faces! The Mayflowers that attended LABBS' Convention were full of praise for the friendly, welcoming and dynamic atmosphere. They informed the other Mayflowers of 'a buzz (warmup)' in the air, filled with pure joy: a 'Lucky Day' indeed!

Mayflower members were asked to vote, and with a resounding yes, we agreed to join LABBS. Time to 'Make (y)Our Own Kind Of Music'.

Membership Director Zelda Grey visited the Mayflowers to officially welcome us



LABBS Membership Director, Zelda Grey, welcoming Mayflower A Cappella Chorus to our Association

to LABBS in February 2025. There will rarely be 'One Day Like This'; balloons, badges and biscuits, aka cake!

Having officially become members of LABBS in February 2025, we are looking forward to meeting other LABBS members as we embark on workshops, quartet competitions and Convention later this year.

Keep singing – Mayflower A Cappella Chorus are truly 'Girls on Fire'!

Sara Barron, Chair
Mayflower A Cappella Chorus

45 years of Crystal Chords!

In April we celebrated our 45th anniversary, with cake, singing, a trip down memory lane and even a limited edition gin, commissioned from Stockport Gin (which you can buy [here!](#)). We welcomed some new members to the LABBS family, too! That's them on the front page receiving their LABBS membership pins: (L-R) Ekene Young, Catherine Atherton, Rachael Talbot, Abi Bearn, and Di Meakin.

Not to be outdone by the Manchester men who had started singing a cappella in the style of barbershop, a small clutch of women decided that they would also love to have their own group. And so in 1980, Crystal Chords were formed. In 2025, we celebrate our 45th anniversary, with two founding members still singing with us. Sue Livesey (past LABBS Chair) was one of the founder members. It is wonderful that she has been a member of the group for all its 45 years, right from when that wonderful idea was brought to life, and to hear her share some snippets of the first convention they attended.



Raising a glass to the next 45 years!

In 1980, with Crystals being just a few months old, the chorus went to watch their first national convention which was held at Owens Park, Manchester. The songs, singing, and 'the moves' were so impressive, and oh my, how the

outfits amused everyone!

The following year, Convention was held at Owens Park again and Crystals were thrilled to be asked to mic warm and went along for the day. It was a very exciting experience but with so much happening with stage outfits (orange crimplene!), being the first time on stage, etc., it all passed by in a haze of activity.

At that time, national conventions were very different to what we experience today. They were held on university campuses, and LABBS organised the rooms and put choruses together in resident blocks. All that was needed from choruses was to say how many members were going and pay their money. In those days, all meals were included in the package, so no cooking. Instead, there was plentiful queuing in the refectory, singing songs with anybody who knew the words and notes - it was all so new and thrilling.

A fair number of the chorus at the time were stay-at-home mums, including two of the founder members: Adrienne Brooks had three children aged three, five and seven, Sue Livesey had three as well, aged four, six and eight. The thought of leaving their broods with unsuspecting husbands was very worrying for them! But undeterred and fired with enthusiasm for their new hobby, on the Friday of Convention in 1982, after making sure the children were in school, they rushed to board the coach. Loaded with dress bags and carrier bags clinking with 'something for the room' (nothing changes there!), we were so giddy and excited, singing and rehearsing along the way. It felt wonderful to be stepping into the unknown.

As well as competing, there were shows on Friday and Saturday nights plus an ad hoc show on Sunday morning. The



Founding members receiving their 45 year long service certificates: (L-R) Adrienne Brooks and Sue Livesey

afterglows were fabulous and when they closed the bar at midnight, Crystals went looking for anybody else to sing with. They had no shame. Sing with the White Rosettes? No problem! There was little time for sleeping. There were groups singing all over the campus, and this hungry group of women went hunting to join in wherever they could. Winning medals – they did not care!

Before they could catch their breath, it was time to go home. Unsurprisingly the return coach was a lot quieter. It was time to be reunited with families and children, who had probably not washed all weekend and had eaten fish and chips three nights running! Their weekend of freedom was over – until the next time!

These wonderful women describe those early Conventions as making them feel like they were innocents abroad. 45 years on and it still feels like yesterday to those who went. It will surely be that today's new ladies will remember their own first Convention with just the same clarity and fondness.

'Our eyes had been opened, thank you Crystal Chords!'

Sue Livesey, founder member of Crystal Chords and former Chair of LABBS
Laura Orton, PRO, Crystal Chords



Crystals in the order they joined - for 45 years to 2 months ago!

Fascinating Rhythm celebrate a living legend

In February Fascinating Rhythm celebrated

a five-week Sing Happy in Harmony workshop, with a performance to an appreciative audience that included former FR members who had come to join us to say farewell to our very precious MD, Jo Thorn.

Jo has made the huge decision to step away from barbershop singing after a lifetime (so far!) of commitment and involvement.

Jo's family is steeped in UK barbershop pedigree. Grandparents Irene and Jim Northeast were pub landlords during the 1950s and witnessed local US servicemen breaking into barbershop singing around their bar. They both eventually went on to become barbershop singers and chorus directors. Their daughter, Linda (Taylor), later became involved so that by the time her daughter, Jo, was born it had become a family tradition.

Jo sang from the age of 12 in her grandmother's chorus (Shades of Harmony) in Weston-Super-Mare. All three generations formed an octet called Cameo and then joined Bristol Fashion in 1993 where they competed together in their first LABBS Convention. In 2002 Jo got together with Linda Corcoran, Ali Jack and Donna Hicks to form the very successful [Havoc](#), winning gold at IABS in 2003, and finally gold at LABBS in 2007.

By 2005 Jo (Dean) had joined Fascinating Rhythm and in 2008 was chosen by the membership to fill the position of Musical Director, beginning a 16 year journey which has made her name synonymous with the chorus. Her leadership has always been characterised by confidence, dynamism and a drive to improve. Jo has committed huge amounts of time and energy developing her own - and our - armoury of skills,

to ensure that she added as much as possible to the chorus moving forwards. And move forward we certainly did, from placing 22nd at LABBS (2008) to 5th (2015-18). You can watch our 2017 LABBS Convention performance [here](#).

Every year we had new goals, external coaches and new targets to challenge us. But most of all, we had a director who valued the friendships and support that members of FR have in abundance.

We celebrated Jo's 20 year membership of FR at our AGM in January and Jo reaffirmed that, for her, we are her family and she has revelled in watching us all develop as singers and close friends. She reminisced about us sharing her wedding celebrations (to Steve Thorn) and the joy of making a professional video of [This is Me](#) to celebrate World Down's Syndrome Awareness Day in 2019.

For us there are too many fabulous memories to mention: retreats, performances, after-glow laughter and of course, getting through the lockdown year and beyond, with Jo playing a massive part in keeping us all connected, supported and intact during those challenging months.

So, on February 6th, it was time for a fond farewell; her time as MD book-ended by successful workshops and an abundance of new members.

We were also able to present a final gift from LABBS - recognition of Jo's 40 year dedication and contribution to the Association, as a youth member, adult member, quartet champion, musical director and coach. What an inspiration and living legend.

Kitty Davies Fascinating Rhythm



Havoc



Jo and Fascinating Rhythm



Jo receiving her 40-year LABBS certificate and pin



Jo with Bristol Fashion



No Strings quartet

An amazing, busy start to Spring for Junction 14

Spring is a lovely time of year and is also the start of a busy time for Junction 14.

It began on Saturday 8th March when we took part in a concert at Stantonbury Theatre in Milton Keynes, to celebrate International Women's Day. Along with several other choirs and solo singers we performed on stage together with the Alina Orchestra which was amazing. We did our own set of songs but also sang *I Am Woman* and *March of the Women* with another choir and the orchestra. The guest conductor for the day was Catherine Rose who did an amazing job, and it was a fabulous evening.

The following Saturday, 15th March, we took part in Milton Keynes Festival of the Arts at The Venue Theatre



I Am Woman Concert

in Milton Keynes. There was tough competition this year and first place in the barbershop section went to Capital Connection from the London area. Congratulations to them, they were amazing.

On the afternoon of Friday 21st March we performed for the Readers Service in Milton Keynes. This is an annual event for us and always an enjoyable experience with an appreciative audience.

Our very own MD, Debbie Teague, and assistant MD, Anne McGrath, attended the Directors Day in Coventry on Saturday 23rd March. Always a wonderful informative day.

On Thursday 3rd April we took part in the UK Choirs Sing for Ukraine event



Junction 14 at UK Choirs Sing for Ukraine

in Midsummer Place, Milton Keynes. What a lovely fundraiser this was. There were several choirs from Milton Keynes taking part and also a group of singers called Mavka who are from Ukraine. There were collection buckets around for the public to donate towards an emergency ambulance to be sent to Ukraine.

Lastly, we had a fabulous rehearsal on Thursday 10th April, when we had a special visitor from LABBS. Liz Mountain-Town came along to visit us and joined in with several polecats. It was lovely to hear about her own barbershop journey and about her experience as Secretary on the Board of Directors of LABBS.

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**



Liz Mountain-Town with Junction 14

Smooth sailing and sounds: Spinnaker chorus sets course for success!

Spinnaker's annual retreat is a cherished tradition, offering members an opportunity to refine their skills, strengthen bonds and, of course, prepare for the coming LABBS convention. As a new member, I had heard many good things about this weekend and was bursting with anticipation! We were delighted and honoured this year to have Alex de Bruin as our guest director and vocal coach. Alex brought with

him a wealth of knowledge and new ideas to help our chorus flourish and grow.

During our stay at the beautiful Langstone Quays Resort there was little time to enjoy the scenery. We clocked up almost 10 hours on the risers, adapting performance plans, applying new vocal techniques and remembering the old ones!

Just as it seemed we would be getting some rest, it was time for the evening entertainment. I had never seen so much variety on one stage before! From beautiful quartet performances to a sumo suit dance duet, and stunning solos to ostriches laying crocheted eggs, this show had it all! Our beautiful baritones took home the prize for best skit with a Gavin and Stacey line dance routine, complete with our very own Nessa who you can see on the cover of this edition!



Spinnaker Chorus with Alex

After working through an intense but enjoyable rehearsal on Sunday, we all went home feeling fulfilled, proud, and in need of a nap, with many-a-story to tell friends and family.

Thank you, Spinnaker, for an amazing retreat. The first of many to come!

**Ellie Aldworth, PRO
Spinnaker Chorus**



Nicky's Warm up routine

Wow!

What an amazing year so far for Silver Lining.

Celebrating our 25th year, thirty-one of us travelled to Calpe in April to compete in the BIBA competition. The advance party, there for a whole week, got the info on the hotel kettles, where the best ice-cream was (as you can see on the front page!), and what best to order on the Tango menu. We also tested the mini train to the old town but didn't realise there was a stop button and almost did a full circle without realising!

A few intrepid members were down on the beach at 8am for a pre-breakfast swim. The water was 16 degrees and positively balmy compared to the rivers and lakes we usually go to around Coventry, but most joined us on the beach for a lie in the sun and a chat. It was so nice to have time together - we all really enjoyed it.

Competition day dawned and our rehearsal was in a noisy part of the hotel lobby with drilling and banging going

on, and the sun blazing in through the windows without any air con, but in some ways it all added to the experience. As we went on stage some members in the UK sent messages to say they were online waiting to see us perform which was so nice; it really made us want to do them proud.

What a result. As a chorus we aren't sure if it was the 78.2% or our MD Sara Jackson's reaction that was the best thing. It also meant our amazing AMD Jo Lea was able to direct us on stage in the show performing one of our favourite repertoire songs, *True Colours*. We love you Sara and Jo, you do such an amazing job, and we are so pleased to have achieved this with you both.

Returning to the UK with our medals we had no time to relax as we were competing in the Northampton Music Festival four days later. So, with a group of 27 we performed again. This time we were thrilled to come first and receive another trophy to bring back to our rehearsal space.



A happy MD!

We have two new songs on the go at the moment, so I'm off to practice and sing some songs in the sunshine, much to the delight of my neighbours, I am sure.

**Heather Morton, PRO
Silver Lining**



Northampton winners



Lynne, Janice and Jacqui celebrating in Calpe



Rachel and Shawwna pose with the Rock and the Bronze

Welwyn Harmony: winners of the Jean Digby Award for Best A Cappella Performance

On 16 March Welwyn

Harmony competed at the Watford Festival of Music, Speech and Drama in the Choirs Open section, along with some familiar names and faces in the form of Rickmansworth Players' Choir, Caritas Harmony, and In Good Company. The brief was simply to sing two contrasting songs, but the result was a wonderfully mixed day of superb singing in different styles. Welwyn Harmony sang *Come What May* from the film *Moulin Rouge* and *Let the River Run* from *Working Girl*; the first a moving ballad of everlasting love and the

latter a joyful upbeat anthem.

Adjudicator, Jane Wilkinson, praised our 'lovely sense of energy and spirit!' as well as our 'great word painting'. We were thrilled to receive the new Jean Digby Award for Best A Cappella Performance throughout the day, gifted by Just A Cappella in memory of Jean.

It was also lovely to see some current and previous Welwyn Harmony singers competing in the Small Group category with Dams'n Jam - which featured our two Lindas - and winning the group! Thanks as ever to our Director, Oli Goodall, for inspiring us with his energy and musical leadership.



Welwyn Harmony will next be performing at our concert on Saturday 14th June at St John the Evangelist Church, Welwyn Garden City, with both matinee and evening performances!

**Emma Harper, PRO
Welwyn Harmony**

Spring has sprung

Well, now that spring has most definitely sprung our thoughts turn to foreign places. In the case of the Red Rosettes, that foreign place is Helsingborg in Sweden. We were very honoured to represent LABBS in May at SNOBS Convention 2025.

It had been a challenge in every sense. Getting 50 ladies from Leyland to Sweden by bus, train and plane was a logistical nightmare but our wonderful members rose to the challenge and we were looking forward to such a unique opportunity.

Sweden is not the cheapest of places and our chorus members undertook numerous fundraising events to get us there. These included an 18 mile sponsored walk of the [Guild Wheel](#) around Preston, craft events, raffles, JustGiving pages, and a hugely entertaining Murder Mystery event.

In amongst all these events we managed to squeeze in a wonderful day in Morecambe for coaching with the award winning John Garrett, followed by a

recording session for a number of our repertoire songs. This was our prize for winning the Lancashire Choir of the Year competition in October. We had a wonderful day which culminated in our very own flash mob singing on the bracing seafront at Morecambe. Four of our younger members had a very enjoyable day with the Youth Chorus too, and we look forward to seeing them perform at LABBS' Convention.

A group of members also attended the LABBS Education day in Sheffield and were coached on Linda Corcoran's beautiful arrangement of *Songbird*. It was particularly poignant for us as this arrangement is in memory of our late MD, Katie Phillips, and it took place on the 10th anniversary of her untimely death at the age of 28. It was very emotional for those of us who had known Katie. We were overwhelmed by the generosity of the tributes to her and how everyone sang their hearts out in her memory.

We were very privileged to receive a day of coaching from the legendary Sean Devine in March, which we hope will

enhance our performance at EBC and later in the year at LABBS.

On our return from Sweden we plan to hold a party to celebrate 45 years of The Red Rosettes. We will be joined by past and present members, former MDs and family members. We try to always acknowledge how much our family support means to us all. We should have had a 40th birthday party five years ago but sadly, Covid put paid to that so we will certainly be making up for it this year. The only thing we managed to produce then was our beautiful Limited Edition Red Rosettes Gin. Rumour has it there may be a bottle as a raffle prize - I can't believe anyone has managed to keep a bottle of gin for five years!

Finally, I must mention the arrival of beautiful baby Theodore (Teddy) Crowder, born to our chorus member Ruth. Congratulations! Three chorus babies in three years!

Life's a song, we sing it!

Ann Atkin
The Red Rosettes



Songbird



Ruth and Teddy



The Red Rosettes in Morecambe

Sheffield Harmony makes a happy return to LABBS

Anyone who knows

Sheffield can tell you it's a city that carefully balances its tradition and creative reinvention, and the women of Sheffield Harmony Chorus are no strangers to this.

Which is why, after an 18-year absence, the chorus is excited to be making a return to its original barbershop home this year by rejoining LABBS, under the direction of Ros Kipps.

Ros, Sheffield Harmony director since 2018, was until recently director of the LABBS Youth Chorus and is also a member of Steel City Voices, another local LABBS group. She said Sheffield Harmony was looking for a change, having had a break from competing, and that she was excited about taking the chorus to Convention.

"As a LABBS director since 2016, I know first-hand what a supportive atmosphere it is at a Convention, with everyone willing other groups to do their best. I think it's just what Sheffield Harmony needs for our return to competition," says Ros.

"We have had quite a few new recruits since we last competed, and I'm excited to introduce them to their first Convention experience surrounded by friends, both local and further afield."

Formed in 1978 in the kitchen of founder member Joan Streets, the group were originally called Sweet n' Low, after the sugar packs scattered on the table. The chorus had grown from nine members to 25 by the time they were welcomed into

LABBS in 1980. They attended their first Convention that year, in Manchester, as mic warmers, and the following year, went on to win the Novice Chorus Award. In 1983, they took fourth place at the contest in Exeter.

In 1995, Sheffield Harmony adopted their current name as they moved to Sweet Adelines, after a brief stint as the Don Valley Chorus. Over the next few years they threw themselves into competitions in the UK and overseas. They also thoroughly established their place in the Sheffield cultural scene, even featuring in a documentary in 2012 about local music icons Pulp, where they performed a cover of *Common People* on the steps of the City Hall.



Sheffield Harmony Christmas concert 2023

But last year the chorus started to feel it was time for a fresh start, and in October they voted to rejoin LABBS, to embrace a new challenge and more opportunities for education and performing.

Founder member Joan said she had no idea, when she first chanced upon

barbershop, how much it would change her life:

"But I was hooked," she said. "I've been through all the ups and downs from Sweet n' Low with LABBS, Sheffield Harmony with Sweet Adelines, and back to our British friends".

"Although I no longer sing, it is still in my blood, and I wish Sheffield Harmony all the best for their latest adventure. Enjoy every minute."

The chorus also returns to LABBS buoyed by their success at last year's British Association of Barbershop Singers (BABS) Convention where, as part of the Crucible Vocal Project (CVP), they took the gold medal for Mixed

Chorus - and an invitation to the European Barbershop Convention in Sweden - with their performance of *If You Love Me and Keep Your Sunny Side Up*. The Crucible Vocal Project is a joint endeavour with two other local choruses - Steel City Voices and the men of Hallmark of Harmony.

Ros said singing at the Harrogate Convention later this year will be a special moment for the Sheffield barbershop scene:

"For me personally, it will be very special to have both my choruses there - Sheffield

Harmony and Steel City Voices. There's great camaraderie between the Sheffield choruses and I know we will be cheering each other on!"

Anna Jones
Sheffield Harmony



Sheffield Harmony's director, Ros Kipps



Sheffield Harmony Pulp documentary performance

Still buzzing from BIBA, now heading for harmony in Harrogate!

Six Town Sound is riding high

after a truly unforgettable trip to Calpe, Spain, where we hit the international stage at the BIBA Convention and came home with silver medals and a result that went beyond what we'd dared to dream – an 82%! It was a weekend full of sun, song, shared passion, and a performance that marked a real step up for us as a chorus.



Six Town Sound, buzzing!

Our performance has also secured us automatic qualification for the Barbershop Harmony Society International Convention in St. Louis in 2026: an exciting opportunity that's now firmly on the table. While we've not yet made a decision about whether we'll take up

the invitation, it's a milestone we're proud to have reached.

But if you thought that was the peak of our year, think again! We're already full steam ahead toward our next big goal: LABBS Convention in Harrogate this October. It's a chance to take everything we've learned, push our sound even further, and share the stage once again with our brilliant barbershop family.

To help us level up, we're teaming up with our fantastic friends at Second City Sound for a joint chorus retreat in September at the gorgeous Ingestre Hall. The weekend promises to be one of the highlights of the year, with time to refine our music, strengthen our unity, and enjoy the kind of collaboration that makes barbershop so special.

We're also thrilled to be welcoming David McEachern and Tyler Wigginton as our guest educators for the retreat. Their energy, experience, and insight are sure to bring fresh inspiration, new skills, and



On the international stage at BIBA

more than a few 'aha' moments as we prepare for the national stage.

And as always, our doors are open to new members. We're proud to be part of such a vibrant barbershop community, and we're always thrilled to welcome new voices into the fold, whether you're moving to the area, looking for a fresh challenge, or just fancy dropping in for a sing. There's something special happening at Six Town Sound, and you'd be very welcome to be part of it.

Watch this space – there's so much more to come!

**Lizzie Tomkinson, Marketing Manager
Six Town Sound**

What makes us 'Team InSpires'

We have had a quiet few months

in terms of sing-outs and new members joining but have been dedicated to rehearsing new repertoire for Convention, and the Costume Team is soon to reveal new performance dresses.

The performances lined up for later this year include our own concert in July and a high profile booking in September which I will write about in future editions. The highlight this Spring was our workshop with Sally McLean, beginning on St David's Day.



Harmony InSpires with Sally

With Spring sunshine and a clear blue sky, we arrived on the first day of the workshop to find a beautiful Welsh themed display courtesy of Jo Birtles who is from South Wales. Jo is mother to our Musical Director Hari, and holds Wales dear in her heart since moving away.

A table was set with a vase of daffodils and leeks, a sweet photo of Hari as child dressed in Welsh national costume, plates of home baked Welsh cakes and a loaf of Bara brith. For anyone unaware of these traditions, they provided an insight. The treats were enjoyed during the breaks, and on the second day cupcakes were kindly brought along by Shelly who was celebrating her birthday that weekend.

It is touches like these that epitomize the spirit of Harmony InSpires. Whether a new or established member, everyone is made to feel so welcome and like family, and personal milestones become chorus celebrations for all to acknowledge.

We think Harmony InSpires is one of



Hari and Jo Birtles on St David's Day

only a few choruses who, as well as Jo and Hari, have two further sets of family connections with Alison and her daughter Vicky, and three generations of the same family with Jan, our oldest member, her daughter Lisa and Lisa's daughter Chloe, our youngest member.

Though our members come from diverse backgrounds, lifelong friendships have been formed through the mutual love of singing, and from being part of a successful chorus affectionately known to us as 'Team InSpires'.

**Caroline Green, PRO
Harmony InSpires**

The Great Fashion Chorus of Bristol?

The Great Western Chorus describe themselves as 'an ordinary bunch of guys brought together by a desire to perform and sing'. We call them 'family'.

The truth is GWC feel like big brothers and with our Musical Director Craig Kehoe also directing the 'boys', the opportunity for a family day out was too good an opportunity to miss.

The plan: a collaboration, working together and learning from each other as we produce a piece of eight-part harmony.

Sam Hubbard's beautiful arrangement of *Without a Song*, wonderfully performed during the lockdown period by Hallmark of Harmony, Cheshire Chord Company, Sheffield Harmony, Steel City Voices and The White Rosettes, was selected. Music was shared with the two choruses in advance and a date agreed.

Jump to a chilly February morning at GWC HQ, and the anticipation was as sharp as the morning frost.

Risers were swiftly erected as singers arrived and greeted each other - some singing together already with the Bristol Mix, in quartets, or having long-term

friendships. Due to the support we have offered each other over the years, the relationships are quite strong. But, both choruses have newer members and for some this was their first experience of an '8-parter'!

Chatter settled, and the 'work' began.

We were treated to a special video message from the wonderful Sam Hubbard who wished us luck for a productive day ahead and then we were off: warm ups, sectionals, discussions, listening and a whole load of singing!

It was a fantastic challenge for both choruses to sing eight part harmony and for Craig to bring it to fruition. The sound was at times sublime, the learning from each other bountiful, and the joy, priceless.

Of course, It wouldn't be a barbershop event without the two choruses performing songs to each other, and it was a special treat to hear In the Wings sing their contest package for BABS. We can't wait to sing with them again.

**Debbie Trotman, PRO
Bristol Fashion**



MD Craig



Riser Buddies: GWC and BF

UKTHB: back with a bang!

After a whole year of anticipation, at the end of April Extreme Quartetting-mad barbershoppers from the UK and as far away as the USA arrived in Nottingham for the second UK Treble Harmony Brigade weekend.

Memory banks fully charged with either eight or twelve songs, we were on a mission to sing in quartets with as many different people as possible.

Those who sang with everyone from other voice parts earned the title Harmony Hotshot, and those super keen bees who

also learned a song in another vocal line to sing with everyone in their own part became Harmony Hypershots.

Even when we weren't singing there were plenty of opportunities to make new brigading buddies, either on the optional Thursday and Friday activities or simply hanging out in the bar over a coffee (or something stronger!).

Saturday was contest day, singing a randomly-selected song with a randomly-selected quartet judged by Barbershop Royalty Delyth and Dick Knight. Once the results were in, it was on to the Saturday

night show featuring everyone in two mass sings, plus some very special surprise acts.

All too soon it was Sunday morning and time to say goodbye, but not until we'd had our awards ceremony and one last chance to sing together.

The dates are already being finalised for UKTHB 2026 and we just can't wait to do it all again!

Hils Apicella
UK Treble Harmony Brigade



Gold Quartet, Symphonic Seranaders:
Kate, Sarah, Lucy & Stacy



Silver Quartet, Quadruple Trouble:
Susanne, Marcia, Aurélie & Linda



Bronze Quartet, Humorous Harmonic
Foursome: Sam, Charlie, Sus & Catherine



Star Quartet: Sausage, Marcia,
Penny & Natascha



UKTHB Committee: Sara, Ruth, Fiona,
Catherine, Lynne & Linda



Chorus Sing directed by Jackie



Harmony Hotshots: Sang with everyone from the other voice parts

Remembering Gail Grainger

"Our lives will never be the same again without her, but we are all richer in life for having known her."

As many of you will now know, on 13th March 2025, Gail lost her fight with cancer, aged 70. Gail battled so bravely for the seven months since her diagnosis. In spite of being so poorly, she continued to share her sense of optimism and lust for life with everyone she touched.

Gail was fiercely loyal, loving and independent, easy-going, and with a great sense of humour.

She faced her diagnosis head-on and never complained. Without a trace of jealousy, she was always happy to hear about other people's adventures despite the ever-increasing limitations placed on her own. Her deep love for others made her determined to get as much from life as she could and, even in those final months, to give back as much as she could, raising close to £5,000 for charity.

Gail was well known in the barbershop world. She sang with Mountain Harmony before joining The White Rosettes bass section - not once, but twice - and remained a staunch supporter of the chorus. She also sang briefly with Tyneside Ladies. While living in Spain, Gail sang with The Velvetones chorus and soon became the Director of Spangles chorus. She also became the Director of a men's chorus, The Torreveja Harmonizers. Gail also

sang in several quartets, ladies and mixed, and was President of SABS twice, supporting its conventions in many capacities.

Shortly after returning from Spain, Gail introduced herself to Jax Mumford and expressed an interest in joining LABBS Contest Admin (as it was called then). With Gail's experience of SABS contests, Jax jumped at the opportunity to have her on the team. It didn't take long for Gail's knowledge to shine through, and she was soon certified. Jax also discovered Gail was very good at calligraphy, and so of course she was immediately tasked with writing all the certificates. Determined to succeed in all she did, Jax recalls an incident when judges' badges were ordered but the company made some spelling mistakes. Gail was horrified! But still, Jax remembers they had many laughs about it.

As well as being an Administrative Judge, Gail spent two periods as Membership Director on the LABBS Board - a role she excelled at given her renowned efficiency and her warm friendly manner with everyone. When Jill Cook succeeded her in 2020, Gail couldn't have been kinder. Jill recalls fondly how patient she was when dealing with all Jill's queries, and how willing she was to pass on her extensive



knowledge of the role. Debi Cox recalls fond memories, too. Calls from Gail for help with the web technicalities of her role always resulted in technical advice being dealt with quickly, followed by a good, long chat, setting the world to rights.

Gail loved LABBS and was always positive and generous, and such a fantastic supporter of clubs and individual members. She was a hard, conscientious and diligent worker, but was always ready for a laugh when the time was right. She will be sorely missed by all who worked with her, and all who came to know her through her dedication to our association.

Gail had such a presence and was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. She will be greatly missed by many, not least of all by Zoë Gibson, her daughter, her husband, Charles, and her granddaughter, Olivia Williamson, who are all actively involved in LABBS.

Zoë would love to receive any memories, stories or anecdotes you have about Gail so the family can create a memory book.

In memory of her mum, Zoë's [JustGiving page](#) is for Cancer Research UK. Donating to cancer research is vital because it fuels scientific breakthroughs, improves treatments, and ultimately aims to prevent, detect, and treat cancer, saving lives and improving the quality of life for those affected.

The White Rosettes and LABBS



Convention 2024: Zoë, Gail and Olivia in their [Daft as a Brush](#) t-shirts

Remembering Cath Klaces

It's always difficult when chorus loses a member, but more so when they're taken way too soon, so it's with heavy hearts that we announce the recent passing of our dear Cath Klaces following a short illness.

Cath was a valued member of our bass section. She was introduced to barbershop after singing with Sweet Adelines in Sheffield, then joined us in 2011 after moving to the area.

She previously worked for Blind Veterans UK as a Reablement Officer, and Mountain Harmony sang at a few of their events which was always enjoyed - especially when the audiences joined in. Cath also supplied chorus with her fresh, organic

fruit and vegetables - which again, were always enjoyed!

Cath had an amazing sense of humour - as you can see by her very colourful ensemble for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee back in 2022.

Members of Mountain Harmony Chorus were honoured to be asked to sing at her memorial service a few weeks ago and we hope we did her proud, because there's a Cath-shaped gap in our bass section now.

Rest in peace Cath, as you sing with the angels.

Mountain Harmony



Cath Klaces

Remembering Maureen Widd

Maureen was a member of The White Rosettes and LABBS from 1978 to 2012, singing bass. She travelled all over the UK with the chorus and enjoyed many trips abroad, including Canada, Chicago, New Orleans, and Columbus, Ohio.

She was kind, generous, caring, strong-willed, determined, and a wonderful provider of advice and guidance - whether you requested it or not! She was very welcoming to new members and always willing to explain the nuances of barbershop to them. As a nurse, she often applied her skills within the chorus.

Maureen is survived by her husband, Trevor, who for many years supplied bottled water to LABBS events, and her children, Nichola and Damien.

Louise Williams
The White Rosettes



Maureen Widd

Remembering Pauline Winn

Pauline was an Honorary Life Member of The White Rosettes, singing bass with the chorus from 1988 to 2005 and was a front-rower for many years. She sang bass in A-Z with Zoë Gibson, Nancy Kelsall, and Anthea Hargreaves, who won the Novice Quartet trophy in 1993.

Pauline was also the bass in Crackerjack!, the 1999 LABBS Quartet Champions, along with Annie Foley, Joanne Braham, and Louise Williams. Crackerjack was also the Millennium Bronze Quartet in 2000 and starred in Heartbeat on Christmas Eve 2000 (Series 10, Episode 10, last five minutes).

Pauline only left The White Rosettes when she became ill with Myeloma, which after intensive treatment, she came through, albeit an

inch or two shorter and with much shortness of breath. Sadly, Pauline was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2024 and died peacefully in St. Gemma's Hospice, Leeds, on 9 February 2025.



Crackerjack!: Annie, Pauline, Joanne, and Louise

Pauline was such a lovely lady, fun to be with, talented, determined, feisty, beautiful through and through, and very much loved by her family and friends, who were many.

Our thoughts are with Rowland, her devoted husband of sixty-five years, her brother Paul, and her three children, Michael, Andrew and Shirley Winn, and their families.

Louise Williams
The White Rosettes

Remembering Clive Landey

The White Rosettes were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of their founder and friend, Clive Landey, who passed away on 27 February 2025.

Clive loved music, especially barbershop. It was his second family and his joie de vivre. In 1977, already a member of the White Rose Barbershop Singers in Leeds, Clive volunteered to direct the newly formed Leeds Ladies Barbershop Chorus, and so The White Rosettes chorus was born. Clive and his wife Sandra were utterly devoted to The White Rosettes. Their knowledge, energy and dedication saw the chorus become hugely successful both within and outside the barbershop world. Their drive for success and high expectations of chorus members were unyielding, and they both led by example.

Under Clive's leadership The White Rosettes won seven gold medals, sang in the USA competing at the Buckeye Invitational, as guests at the (then)

SPEBSQA international convention, and in Canada as guests of Harmony, Incorporated. Appearances at prestigious venues such as the Albert Hall and the accolade of Sainsbury's Single Voice Choir of the Year all took their place on Clive's long list of accomplishments with his beloved White Rosettes family. Clive and Sandra stepped down at the 1997 Convention in Harrogate and, having firmly planted the chorus' roots, Clive handed over the

reins to Sally McLean in January 1998.

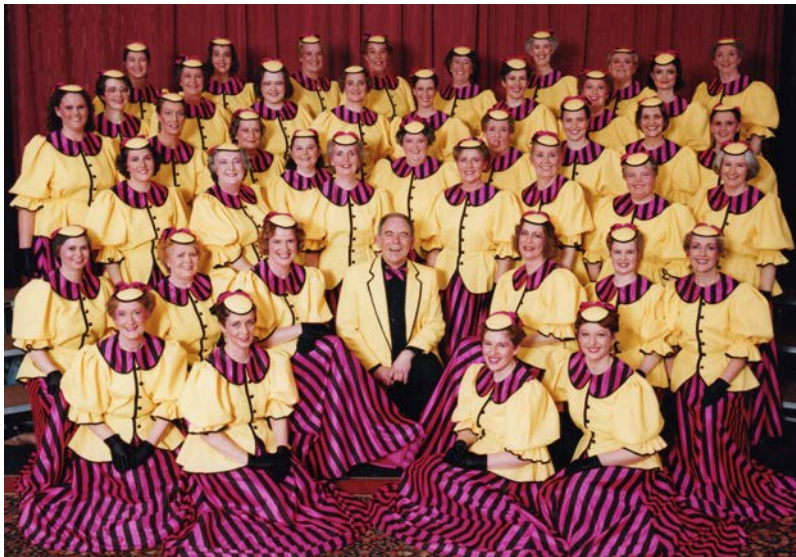
Clive loved performing and was also a talented director. Over the years, he sang in a number of quartets, winning a gold medal in 1982 with Limited Company.

After a spell directing Crystal Chords from 1998 – 2002, Clive and Sandra stepped away from LABBS and BABS, moving to London to be close to their family and their grandchildren. As a

parting gift to LABBS, they established the Clive Landey award which is still in place today and each year is awarded to the winning chorus at LABBS Convention.

Clive was a true legend of British barbershop. He was loved by many and leaves a lasting legacy for generations of barbershoppers.

Louise Williams
The White Rosettes



Clive and the White Rosettes, 1993

RISERS FOR SALE

Junction 14 are selling their Black Cat Risers.



In very good condition, they have five to seven sets of three step risers, complete with back and side rails.

They also have five to seven of a fourth extra step which are brand new and unused.

For further information and price, please email Serena:

s.teer321@btinternet.com

TUNICS AND SKIRTS FOR SALE

Approximately 50 ladies' tunic tops. These are well made, in purple embroidered sequin taffeta. Fully washable, 100% polyester and in sizes 10 to 26, with flattering elbow length sleeves, side splits, back zipper, fully lined - like new, at £5 each or £200 for all tops.



Three rolls of material same as tunic tops, 58" (147cm) wide, each roll 25m, at £150 per roll. We're willing to sell the rolls separately.

Plain purple Dupion satin pencil slim skirts to complement the tunic tops. Skirts are fully lined and ankle length with side split, back zipper. Again, various sizes, fully washable and we're selling these together with quarter roll of the same material for £50.

Please contact Mountain Harmony at mountainharmonychorus@gmail.com for further details.

Ready for a costume refresh???

The White Rosettes are currently selling 2 of our past stage dresses, we would love for them to have a new lease of life.

Both have approximately 60-70 dresses in various sizes UK size 8 to 24 (more details can be provided on request).

Discount for a bulk purchase available. Delivery charges (if needed) to be paid by buyer.

Please contact treasurer@whiterosettes.org.uk



Some Ritz?
£10 per dress



Some Glitz?
£20 per dress



CONGRATULATIONS!

Our congratulations to BABS on a very successful Convention at the end of May, and to the weekend's champions:

Male Chorus – Cottontown
Mixed Chorus – Lux A Cappella
National Quartet – The 1234
Youth Quartet – The Six Foot Four
Senior Quartet – The Old Romantics