

# Voice Box

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



Autumn 2023 £4

## SOUTH WEST SONG FEST, INTERNATIONAL ROUNDUP, AND SUMMERTIME FUN!



**Plus!** Convention update, going hybrid, and more!

## Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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## Chair's Forward

**Hello again!** What a busy and enjoyable few months I've had since the last edition of VoiceBox.

I and other members of the Board have been out and about visiting choruses and attending events, even during the awful rains we experienced in early summer! In July, I spent a few days in the far south west at a concert in the magnificent Carnglaze Caverns, featuring GraceNotes Acapella, Bristol Fashion, and The Celtic Male Ensemble (which, incidentally, included an ex-Chair of BABS, Martin Baglow). Despite the damp and drips it was a lovely evening, and I was able to visit GraceNotes and Celtic Chords rehearsals while I was in Cornwall, too. It was really good to see both choruses thriving and happy.

Overall, LABBS is growing across the country, and this is a very healthy state of affairs. Of course, we all know that the cost of everything is increasing and belts are being tightened, so it's really good to see that we still have new and existing members committed to supporting our choruses.

In other news, we have recently welcomed the very expert Debi Cox to our team of LABBS Liaison Officers. We are fortunate to have excellent LLOs with wide-ranging interests and experience, who are all ready to discuss any aspect of your chorus with you, and visit if you would like them to. Do check out the [Directory of LABBS Liaison Officers](#) on our website, where you'll find details of their areas of expertise and contact information.

Preparations for Convention in October are well underway, and we are looking forward to seeing many of you there. I would encourage you to come even if you are not competing; it is the highlight of the LABBS year, and is a very friendly, enjoyable event. We will also be integrating mixed quartets into the Quartet Competition this year, and we're delighted they now have a permanent home with LABBS. I extend a warm welcome to them and look forward to seeing their performances in October.

You will know by now that Convention 2024



will be in Bournemouth. Some of you have spoken to me about the difficulty of getting to the two Convention venues we have been using recently. Our Events Director, Kristina, has been searching diligently for alternatives, but our very specific requirements do make it difficult. Please be assured that we are doing all we can, and if we find somewhere suitable that is more central, we will definitely try it out!

I hope you've all had a lovely summer whatever the weather, and I look forward to meeting more of you as the year progresses, and definitely at Convention - it will be here before we know it!

**Sue Ranson**  
LABBS Chair

## Update from your Editor

**What a busy** couple of months I've had!

The end of June saw me attend Prelims and, despite the subtropical temperature in the auditorium, what a wonderful weekend it was! I had one of the best seats in the house - front and centre behind my camera - and got to watch spectacular performances from our quartets. Well done to everyone who crossed the stage - you were great!

On to July, and at the time of writing I'm getting stuck into Convention plans with the Events Team. It's sure to be a brilliant weekend, and you can find an update on page 3 from Events Director, Kristina. Further updates

will be shared on LABBS' website and social media, so please do keep an eye out for them.

On the subject of social media, do you know we have private Facebook groups for keeping in touch and sharing information? They're a great way to connect with each other, and to draw on the experience of the LABBS hive mind, so please do check them out:

[LABBS Members Discussion Group](#), for all LABBS members.  
[LABBS Chair Forum](#), for Chairs and Vice Chairs of LABBS clubs.  
[LABBS Directors' Cafe](#), for LABBS Musical Directors and Assistant Musical Directors.  
[LABBS Quartets Corner](#), for LABBS

quartet members (including mixed quartets).  
[LABBS PRO & SM Network](#), for LABBS PROs and Social Media people.

That's it from me for this edition, but before I sign off I want to wish good luck to everyone crossing the stage in Harrogate - I can't wait to see you all!

**Mel Baber, Editor**  
VoiceBox





# LABBS Convention 2023

## Convention 2023 update

### Goodness, I've been in post as LABBS Event Director

for around a year, and Convention 2022 found me hitting the ground running. My thanks go to Faith and the rest of the Event teams comprising Stage Technicians, Couriers, Dressing rooms, Audio Visual expertise, Back Stage, Shows Manager, Front of House, Reception, Door Steward, and Contest Admin, for guiding, encouraging and generally making sure I survived! Also to friends who supported me with regular, much-needed coffee breaks and conversation.

It was such a joyous occasion after the long-lasting Covid restrictions. It was so glorious to be back singing, catching up with friends and generally having fun. The familiar sounds of spontaneous singing could be heard once again from under the stairwell, around a quiet corner, even in the local hostelry, and of course, the long-awaited afterglow in the bar area.

Prelims 2023 was held at Blue Coat School, Coventry, during what felt like the hottest weekend in June. Quartets of all ages and experience melted, dripped, and performed brilliantly to achieve one of the sixteen semi-final places.

Seven mixed quartets also participated in Prelims for the first time this year. LABBS wanted to offer them a home and a sense of belonging, rather than continue to be isolated with a separate contest on the Sunday afternoon at Convention, with a tiny audience. If the minimum BHS qualifying score is met, the Mixed Quartet Competition at LABBS Convention also satisfies the requirements for nomination by LABBS, to compete at BHS International. It is a win all round as we are enriched by their performances and enthusiasm.

Plans for Convention are taking shape. For those of you who are new to the

barbershop world, while Convention is our annual singing competition, it is also a place to make new friends, catch up with old friends, maybe learn a new tag, or even to try extreme quartetting. Not forgetting the opportunity to explore Harrogate and perhaps visit the famous Betty's tea shop!

Convention Friday starts early at 09.45. You will be able to see the mixed quartets inaugural performances in the Quartet Semi-Final Competition, where 22 quartets will compete for 11 places in the Finals. It will be an amazing experience whether you are competing or an audience member. The Finals competition stretches into the evening, with 2022 Gold medallists Met 44 and IN HOUSE quartets treating us to mic cooler performances, before we find out who the 2023 medallists are. There will no doubt be an afterglow around the bar but the evening should finish at a reasonable time, with a not too late night (or should I say, early morning!).

Saturday is another busy day with 26 choruses who will have travelled far and wide, competing for medals. The amazing LABBS Youth Chorus will captivate us with their enthusiastic and engaging performance as they mic cool, and The White Rosettes, our gold medallist chorus from 2022, will mic warm and mic cool.

If you have never attended Convention before you are in for a treat. In addition to the competitions, there are opportunities to watch the best in UK barbershop during both the evening show on Saturday, and the Sunday morning show which will be such a fabulous way to complete our Convention weekend. Don't forget too, that we have a theme for the weekend: Tea Party. Many attendees dress up 'in theme' on Saturday evening, so do get your thinking caps on - what will your outfit be?



Our contribution to reducing waste this year has us ask that you bring your own leak-proof water bottle and use the free, fixed water towers around the venue for refills. You will also be asked to use your water bottle in the warm-up room before moving to the stage area. Paper will continue to be kept to a minimum, so watch out for information and updates on the LABBS website and our social media channels.

As I'm sure you know, LABBS is run by volunteers and Convention is no exception. Have you thought about volunteering for an hour or two while at Convention? Our Social Media, Door Steward, and Receptionist teams would all value your help.

Like all our household bills, the costs for putting on Convention have rocketed, and the team have been looking for ways to reduce what we spend. We cannot afford to provide an event with all the bells and whistles that we would like to, but if you have any ideas that could make Convention extra-special without breaking the bank, we would love to hear about them - please contact me at [events@labbs.org.uk](mailto:events@labbs.org.uk).

I look forward to seeing you in Harrogate - do come and say hello!

**Kristina Mair**  
LABBS Events Director



# LABBS Convention 2023

## Convention 2023: Charities

**LABBS has a proud history of supporting charities at Convention, and this year is no exception.**

**Yorkshire Air Ambulance** is an independent charity providing a lifesaving rapid response emergency service to 5 million people across the whole of Yorkshire. To keep both air ambulance helicopters maintained and in the air, they need to raise £19,000 every single day. The generosity that they receive really is the lifeblood of their charity, and we'll

be helping them with a bra collection at Convention this year. There are plenty more ways you can help Yorkshire Air Ambulance; check out their Events page for more info - <https://www.yorkshireairambulance.org.uk/get-involved/events/>

**Harrogate Homeless Project** provides people experiencing homelessness in the Harrogate District, with a safe place to stay and the support they need to build confidence and move towards independent living. They operate a day centre, supporting people experiencing homelessness with day-to-day care, emergency overnight accommodation, a 16-bed hostel and move on housing

along with a range of support services. We'll be collecting items for HHP at Convention, and would love to receive: UHT milk; squash; coffee; hot chocolate; pot noodles; tinned meats; milk chocolate; biscuits; cooking oil; tin foil; cling film; plastic food containers with lids; cleaning products (especially bleach and antibacterial spray); shower gel; shampoo; toilet rolls; dental products; laundry products; mens and womens clothing (hoodies, sweatshirts, joggers, jeans, summer-weight waterproof coats, trainers and (new) underwear in sizes S, M or L). You can find out more about HHP here - <https://www.harrogate-homeless-project.org.uk/>



**HARROGATE HOMELESS PROJECT**

## Ode to the CA Team

So it began, some Rozzers (ex) white  
Had Contest Admin, within their sight  
And so they joined that Contest team  
And began to fulfil a personal dream  
So much to organise and plan  
But if anyone can do it, Rozzers can.

Sorting medals, sorting judges  
Making sure they bear no grudges  
Sourcing trophies, keeping score  
Counting marks 'til they are sure.

Sorting coaching, sorting sweets  
Ensuring judges get their treats  
Punching data, checking twice  
So the contest runs real nice.

And when it's over and we're in bed  
Thoughts of next time fill their heads  
And as they prep for our Convention  
Had to give this special mention.

So Jax and Cath, we say to you  
To Gail, Denise and Rita too  
Such fabulous work, though you are few  
Thank you so much for all you do.

**Zoe Gibson  
The White Rosettes**



Contest Admin: Cath and Gail; Jax, Rita and Denise

# Making memories

## The past year has been

nothing short of remarkable for IN HOUSE quartet. With determination and hard work, not only were we able to win gold at the 2022 LABBS convention but were also given the opportunity to cross the international stage in Louisville, Kentucky!

The anticipation of competing on the international stage is a long-standing aspiration for many barbershoppers, including all of us at IN HOUSE quartet! To be given the opportunity to compete as the very first female British barbershoppers from LABBS, was a real honour.

As we prepared, the thought of showcasing our talent and skills on a global platform excited us. The opportunity to compete internationally was a testament to our dedication and commitment. We decided early on that we wanted to be memorable, and what better way to achieve this than taking Mary to the US of A!

Witnessing top quartets and choruses from around the world, along with the joy of performing 'Mary Poppins' on stage, contributed to a truly special journey. The British talent that joined us did our organisations proud, and we know that we've left a lasting impression on all those who attended. This convention proved to be an enriching and awe-inspiring celebration of British barbershop, making it an experience that we will cherish for a lifetime.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the incredible support we received from our barbershop community. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to our fundraising efforts.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who supported us in our endeavours, and we look forward to more incredible achievements in the years to come. Together, we turned our dreams into reality.



If you'd like to see more of what we got up in Louisville, make sure you hop over to our [social media accounts](#) where you can see many photos and videos!

### IN HOUSE Quartet

# And now the countdown begins!

## The weekend of 8-9th July 2023 marked an

**important date** in The White Rosettes' diary: it was the start of our 12-month countdown to BHS International 2024. We are beyond excited, as you can imagine.

Huge congratulations to the British and Irish competitors who made history at BHS this year. Wow - their performances were amazing! Special mention to our LABBS quartet, INHOUSE, who were the first LABBS Quartet Champions to enter the international contest. We were so proud to see you up there! 'Practically perfect in every way!'



Mr Blue Sky really did shine at Harlow Carr

Now the work starts for us: Wish us luck!

We kicked off with our annual retreat weekend at the beginning of July with coaching from David Sangster, Musical Director to Forth Valley Chorus. Not only did he deliver outrageously energetic, fun, and exciting coaching, he was also unphased when greeted by ITV Calendar North who had arrived to film us! Excitingly, ITV Calendar North is going to follow us over the next 12 months in the run up to BHS International 2024, and this was the first session they were filming. Ever the consummate professional, David took it in his stride.

The summer has also seen the Rozzers performing to raise funds for our trip. We paved the streets with song at Otley Live Festival, and sang everything we knew in the stunningly beautiful grounds of RHS Harlow Carr. During our rendition of Shine, a young spectator, Violet, Makaton signed the entire piece of music on her own. What a star! Hopefully she will become a future barbershopper!

Fundraising continued in August at Knaresborough Castle, and then on to the Meanwood Neighbour Celebration which is part of Leeds 2023 City of



Friendly rivalry in bass section 'wear it red' competition

Culture Programme. If you can help us at all with some fundraising please let us know, or you can contribute on our GoFundMePage <https://www.gofundme.com/f/SupportTheWhiteRosettesoget-toBHS2024>.

Finally, we cannot wait to see you all at Convention in October in Sally's hometown, Harrogate. We hope all your preparations are going well. We know it will be a feast of great contests, shows, partying, and tags.

Keep Singing!

**Ruth Kirby, PRO  
White Rosettes**

# The latest from Junior FR

## The Summer term

**brought** two outside performance opportunities for both the Junior FR chorus and small groups, at the [Iron Acton May Day Fair](#) and [Yate Rocks](#).

For the first time, four of the girls came together at the May Day Fair to perform as a quartet with their a cappella rendition of ELO's *Mr Blue Sky*. The chorus closed their set with another new achievement: a performance of *This Is Me* from *The Greatest Showman*, in four-part harmony. Singing in four parts is no mean feat, and the girls rose to the challenge without hesitation.

Cream teas were enjoyed, and the parents were entertained by some remarkable performances from the girls, followed by some annual awards as voted for by girls, staff and MD. Congratulations to Jasmine for Most Improved, Lucy for the Helpers Award, Natalie for Junior Role Model, Amelie for Senior Role Model, and Anna for the MD Award. All these awards celebrated kindness, helpfulness, and dedication, which are core values for Junior FR.

Fabulous new songs were added to the repertoire this term too, with *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* and *Could it be Magic*. At the end of the academic year, MD Wendy thanked her whole team for their dedication and hard work in helping to make this year happen.

Some fabulous Junior FR Long Service Awards were made this year, too. Five-year badges for Olivia and Evie, and two more very special members joined Wendy and Kitty in the 'ten-year club' – mum and daughter team, Chloe (staff) and Anna. Wendy thanked all the staff, particularly Chloe, who has stepped up to deputise when needed and been an invaluable right-hand woman. Sad goodbyes and thank-yous were made to Laura and to almost ten-year member, Izzy, who leaves to attend sixth form college.

Final performances of *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* and *Could it be Magic* sent everyone home with a smile on their face (but hopefully no jam and cream!), with all looking forward to returning in September for another year full of Junior FR fun, harmony, friendship and laughter.

One of Junior FR's newest and youngest members, Elsie, has a long-standing connection to Fascinating Rhythm because her grandma, Di, sings bass with the chorus, and her daughter, Mads (Elsie's Auntie) used to sing in the Baritone section.

Di said: "Elsie has been wanting to be part of Junior Fascinating Rhythm since she first saw them perform – she was probably aged 2 or 3! When I told Wendy a year ago, she gave Elsie a JFR hoodie which has hung in the wardrobe for almost a year, waiting! She was so



JFR at Yate Rocks

proud when she finally got to wear it last week. I was amazed at how quickly she fell into the rehearsal process and how quickly she learned her words (not like me!)."

Di continued: "For myself, I have loved seeing and hearing the young talent at its rawest, and I really enjoy helping in the teaching sessions and breakouts. It's added a whole new dimension to the FR experience."

Elsie said: "It's really good being part of Junior FR because I like singing with everyone else, and it makes me really happy because I have made friends there! I was a bit nervous about competing in the Eisteddfod, but it was awesome, and the other choirs were really good!"

**Chloe Roberts, PRO  
Fascinating Rhythm**

## Quartet Corner

# Prelims dress rehearsal

**With Prelims just a few weeks away**, we decided to arrange a dress rehearsal for our family and friends who couldn't make it to Coventry. Then we thought, 'Wouldn't it be lovely to invite our sister quartet, FOMO?'. 6/8 of us sing with Sweet Adelines' Heartbeat Chorus, and FOMO were a novice quartet entering LABBS Prelims for the very first time together. What better way to prepare than to sing in front of your biggest critics: your family, chorus buddies, and close friends!

Sunday the 4th June arrived and our two quartets met early to go through some practice runs and give each other lots

of encouragement and advice. Then, over 30 of our family and friends came to support us and watch each quartet perform their Prelims package (twice!).

Terry Adamson (Northern Soul Karen's dad) did a superb job of keeping us calm, gave each quartet a little pep talk before we entered the stage and announced us in true barbershop fashion - he was fantastic! Thank you so much Terry.

FOMO, although very nervous, were absolutely fantastic, smashed both songs, and looked like they had been performing together for years; we were so proud of them. Northern Soul were



very pleased too, and both quartets received an unbelievable reaction and so much love from our guests.

We were so glad we arranged it on such a lovely sunny day, and the weather made for some lovely photos, too.

Thanks to all who came to see both quartets perform, and for all the love and encouragement.

**Northern Soul**

# Jabberwocky's journey

## As we posed for a photo

in front of a wall emblazoned with 'Anything is Possible', we were thinking of all that we had achieved rather than what lay ahead; we had just been given the Tapestry Award for the most improved quartet at Prelims 2022. For us, Prelims represented the culmination of all our hard work and an end point to a job well done. We were both shocked and delighted to have been given the trophy - something we hadn't even dreamed possible.



'Working hard' with the trophy throughout the year

Fast forward through a year of endless fun with the trophy and throwing ourselves headfirst into coaching, concerts, open mic nights, busking, Harmony College, music festivals, and endless performances for our wonderful chorus, The Abbey Belles. All that as well as visits to sing for our lovely neighbours, The White Rosettes and Main Street Sound, and we finally found ourselves back at Prelims, excited to show everything we had learnt. The culmination of another year of hard work.

We conquered our excitement, our nerves and our emotions, and delivered a performance we were proud of, returning straight back into the auditorium ready to enjoy the remaining performances and looking forward to the rest of the weekend. Instead, we found ourselves in a state of utter disbelief and shock as our name was drawn from the hat as a qualifying quartet for the semi-finals in October! Suddenly, the words 'Anything is Possible' echoed round our heads!



Anything IS possible – Prelims 2022

Why had we not even prepared for this possibility?!

Now we find ourselves on a completely new journey: the Road to Convention! Having recently had a planning meeting to get ourselves organised for this unexpected trip, number one on the list is 'Prepare for the impossible', as we are finally starting to believe anything really is possible!

Thanks to everyone in the LABBS barbershop family who has supported us and helped to make this journey a possibility. From Facebook likes to incredible coaches, you know who you are and we are endlessly grateful.

**Victoria Perry, Tenor  
Jabberwocky**

# The Firebirds' non-competition year

## We had such a fantastic experience at Prelims

and Convention last year, but 2023 presented us with a new set of challenges. We had other commitments, so we couldn't compete - but what does a CAL quartet do in a non-competition year?



The four of us agreed on our three key aims: develop our repertoire, including contestable barbershop and contemporary a cappella arrangements; work on our vocal skills with our coach; raise much-needed quartet funds. And, have as much fun as possible along the way!

Belinda, our baritone, is developing her skills by embarking on judging training

this year. And Susie, our bass, is diving into extreme quartetting at BABS Harmony College later this summer.

Quartet repertoire development is going very well, and we've made excellent progress for next year's contest songs and are extremely excited about Prelims 2024. Building our non-contestable a cappella arrangements is also going strong - including many crowd pleasers in our singout package.

We enjoyed North Northamptonshire Music Festival in June, and would thoroughly recommend the local festival circuit as an excellent way to sing to audiences and practise key performance skills. This year's barbershop quartet category was hotly contested and it was wonderful to share the stage with other LABBS and Sweet Adelines quartets. Singouts have included local schools and town markets, taking every opportunity to spread barbershop harmony.

Our pledge to have as much fun as possible resulted in a true 'Carpe Diem' opportunity. Following a Friday evening message, we found ourselves rehearsing Happy Birthday and then making our way early on Monday morning to

participate in a live broadcast on ITV's Lorraine, singing to the lovely Dr Hillary.

We all know that it's hard to maintain the momentum post-contest, but having commitment to our key aims, and singout dates in the diary, is serving us well in our non-competition year.

**Lorna, Alex, Belinda and Susie  
The Firebirds**



# BHS International

**Back in June I was privileged** to represent LABBS at the Barbershop Harmony Society International Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Accompanied by my daughter Gem, we arrived the day before convention, giving us time to settle into our 15th floor room with a great 'round the corner' view of the Ohio River.

The week was packed with contests. The Quartet Quarter Finals took place on Tuesday and Wednesday with 60 quartets, including IN HOUSE and Hot Ticket representing LABBS, Limelight and Trailblazers representing BABS, and Lady Barbalade representing IABS. They all looked so comfortable on the stage and gave us excellent performances, with Limelight missing the semi-final cut by just four points! On Wednesday evening we watched

the Next Generation Barbershop Varsity Quartet Championship, with The Breakfast Club representing BABS as Youth Champions. There was a lot of British cheering as they won the fifth place medals - what a wonderful achievement!

On Thursday I attended the judges meetings first thing, then had the honour of presenting the International Quartet and Chorus Festival which was great fun. In the evening it was the Quartet Semi Finals (top 20) followed by the World Harmony Showcase featuring our British groups and some other stand-out performances, notably from the Pacific Islands - it was stunning and well worth the late night!

Friday brought the first two sessions of the chorus contest, and the Association of International Champions Show in the evening.

The show paid particular tribute to 1973 Champions, Dealer's Choice, and 1998 Champions, Revival, alongside many other past champions who performed for us.

Saturday morning was the third chorus session and included Meantime who represented BABS brilliantly. The Quartet Finals (top 10) followed. In addition to contests, there were educational events, open rehearsals, and fabulous afterglows.

These words don't come close to capturing the pace and excitement of the whole week. It was so inspiring to watch so many amazing performances, and to meet so many appreciative barbershoppers. Gem and I loved cheering everyone on from our seats just behind the judging area!

**Alison Thompson**  
LABBS Education Director



Alison and BHS Show Production Manager, Chad Bennett



Alison presenting the International Quartet and Chorus Festival

# Barbershop in Germany: BinG! 2023

**In May, Alys (LABBS Finance Director)** and I had the pleasure of attending BinG!'s 2023 convention.

Due to Covid, it was the first time the association had had a convention in five years and the joy and happiness



Kim and Hannah

everyone felt at being back together singing barbershop was palpable.

Alys and I were made so welcome by everyone there and were treated to two fabulous contests and some amazing shows featuring Throwback (Barbershop Harmony Society Silver Medalists) and The Ladies (Sweet Adelines International Queens of Harmony), who were absolutely phenomenal and also very lovely people!

The highlight of the weekend though, had to be getting to wear Kim Newcomb's SAI crown.

Alys and I want to thank BinG once again for their wonderful hospitality, and congratulate all the contestants and winners!

**Hannah Barber**  
LABBS Secretary



Kim and Alys



# Amersham gets ready to fly

**It didn't take much to get us all buzzing** about jetting off to Killarney for this year's IABS Convention - though we'll need some luck to get everyone (including ten newbies) hooked up for the same flight and coach! And, thanks to a little help from some of our tremendously talented friends and chorus members (plus our marvellous MD, Helen Lappert), to send us soaring out of our comfort zones in the pursuit of our most confident, authentic performances yet.

A big turning point came back in May on our Super-Sunday Workshop with the inspirational Performance Coach and LABBS Judge Kirsty Williams, who helped us unleash our instincts to create some truly spell-binding moments in our competition pieces.

Since then, with our eyes firmly on the emerald prize, we've stepped up our rehearsal game with a slicker schedule featuring a steady stream of new arrangements to keep our singing heads switched on.

We're learning to be über careful with our choreo too - we have less riser-room to call our own now, having down-sized from a 10x4 step to an 8x4 step format to replicate the IABS stage conditions!

Plus we've taken our mega-hit Quartet Speed Dating idea to another level ... by turning tea breaks into Quartet 'Open Mic' seshes! With a fantastic five quartets competing at IABS this year (four of which are just doing it for the craic), these spots are a no-brainer for gaining performance experience.

They aren't just for prepped and polished quartets either; anyone who fancies jumping in as a four-(or more)-some is welcome to have a go. So far, four scratch quartets have sung in front of our massively enthusiastic AAC audience, surprising themselves with how much they loved the razzle dazzle - and all the applause!

Beyond that, we've still got a whopper of a weekend retreat and a fab concert with the Knights of Harmony (this year's BABS small Chorus Award Champs) to squeeze in before IABS.

Fingers crossed, all the hard work and confidence-building will pay off and we'll be flying high in Ireland this October!

**Hils Apicella, PRO  
Amersham A Cappella**



# Arun A Cappella's 42nd year celebration

**I can't believe** that having started Arun A Cappella (formerly Arun Sounds) so long ago, here we are celebrating our 42nd Birthday!

Beginning in 1982, we have had a great time along the way, with a trip to the Dolomites as guests of a choir in Selva, putting on various theatre shows, and singing on *Songs of Praise* with Harry Secombe as part of the local Clown Festival. We have performed on shows with Leslie Crowther and Patrick Moore, and travelled the country for numerous

Conventions as well as entertaining the public at fetes, weddings, nursing homes, and as buskers - it's been amazing and we hope for more to come.

We now have a new Director, Naomi Cole, whose enthusiasm is rejuvenating and I continue to help her as Assistant Director. As you can see from the photo, I also helped to blow out our candles with our Chairman, Val Dock!

**June Bryant, Assistant Director  
Arun A Cappella**



Arun A Cappella



Val and June

# Festival fever

**The Belles have enjoyed taking part** in several festivals this summer, starting with Nuneaton Festival on 14th May, then North Northampton Festival on 10th June, and Leamington Festival on 1st July. We enjoyed performing for new audiences, getting to share our artform, and having feedback from different judges with different points of view.

We were delighted with our scores on all three occasions, but particularly when receiving second place to Rhapsody UK Chorus's fabulous performance which won them first place at Northampton. We were honoured to receive the Sharyn Rutterford Cup for The Most Memorable Barbershop Chorus on the Day, in memory of Sharyn who was MD of Rhapsody UK Chorus and a staunch quartet singer and barbershop ambassador, who sadly passed away a few years ago.

We were also delighted to have won the Ryland Shield with a score of 88 at the Leamington Festival, and received a lot of great feedback that will feed into future performances and competitions.

As well as being busy with festivals, we were part of a wonderful evening of music at St. Edith's church on 17th June, and have been fortunate to have had wonderful coaches to guide us this year. Liz Garnett, Emma Shanks and Rachel Small all provided us with wonderful insight for our Convention songs and repertoire.

The Belles will have been together for 35 years in 2024, and we are busy with plans for celebrating this milestone as well as our wonderful 'hobby' - watch this space for news of our plans.

**Emer Scott-Baird, PRO**  
**The Belles of The Spires**



# Ship shape and Bristol Fashion – all aboard for BF on Tour '23

**BF on Tour '23 is shaping up to be** a year of fantastic musical adventures! We've journeyed around our home town for music festivals and workshops, performed in the Cheltenham music festival, nipped to Nottingham for Harmony College, headed back to Bristol to move home and then back up to Coventry for Quartet Prelims!

Time for a rest you say? No way! More miles, smiles and songs were to be had. We found ourselves on a jolly jaunt down south to Cornwall, where we had the absolute privilege and pleasure to be part of a three-chorus show at Carnglaze Caverns.

The idea - the brainwave of our friend Kate Crichton from GraceNotes – a concert, in a cave, bringing together a fine selection of south west chorus talent; Gracenotes Acapella, The Celtic Male Ensemble, and ourselves.

Leading up to the concert, whilst exploring the sound we could make in our new home, The Greenway Centre, we brushed up on our repertoire, fine-tuned our pitch, and focussed on performance and how we could bring our songs to life. The result was the stunning performance we were able

to give within the glistening rocky walls of the cool (10 degrees!) and atmospheric cavern.

Star of the show for us was our fabulous lead, Sally! Singing with both LABBS choruses, between sets she skipped from one side of the cavern to the next and swapped from BF to GraceNotes costume and back again, twice! So we thought we'd sing a song to her: 'HAPPY BIRTHDAY SALLY!'

Each chorus took turns to wow the audience and the show ended with all 80 singers squeezing on to the risers for a joint finale of *Sweet Caroline*. It truly was the musical highlight of our tour so far, and we were thrilled that Sue Ranson was able to support the two LABBS choruses! The lure of the next day's cream tea may have had a helping hand!

From impromptu coffee shop pre-glows (you heard it here first!) to the cavern Afterglow, to the quick trip to Kate's for a lam singing of *Anthem*, and finally the next day's cream tea where GraceNotes, Bristol Fashion and friends got to chat, munch, and break out in to song once more, it really was a BF-on-tour extravaganza!

**Naomi Mallinson, PRO  
Bristol Fashion**



Happy Birthday, Sally!



Bristol Fashion at Carnglaze Caverns

# With a little help from our friends

I was looking at a map of LABBS choruses recently, and it got me thinking about how many little red pins there are on the [map](#), from us all the way down in Cornwall, to Albacappella who are almost 500 miles away in Aberdeen.

As LABBS' furthest south west chorus (just 30 miles from Lands End!), it would be easy for us to feel out on a limb being so far down on the map. We don't though, and our involvement with LABBS and LABBS choruses over the last few months has really made us feel part of the family.

May saw us take part in LABBS' [mass sing for Ukraine](#) as part of the Eurovision celebrations, singing the newest polecat, *With a Little Help from My Friends*. In June we attended South West Song Fest, conceived and hosted by our friends at GraceNotes Acapella. What a wonderful day that was, with five south west choruses getting together for singing, [performing](#), and friendship. Once again, we sang [With a Little Help from My Friends](#) – a very appropriate choice for the day!

July was a busy month too. As well as a visit from LABBS' Chair, Sue Ranson, we also performed at a charity event

raising money for a new roof for St. Austell Market House. What a night! Four hours of non-stop a cappella, not only featuring shanty groups and a BABS chorus and quartet, but even more LABBS friends - mixed quartet, Jam First, and chorus, Acappella Sound. A special mention must go to our bass, Char, who sang in five sets with three different groups, and had some pretty speedy costume changes to get through!

So, what's next for Celtic Chords? We've welcomed several new members to our chorus recently and are looking forward to them joining us at singouts and music festivals over the next few months. And, plans are being made for Bournemouth 2024 – our first Convention in a number of years. We can't wait!

Things are definitely busy down here in the south west, and there is a vibrant and very active barbershop and a cappella scene which we're delighted to be a part of. We're certainly doing more than just getting by with a little help from our friends though – we're thriving!

**Sian Netherton, MD**  
**Celtic Chords**



Celtic Chords performing at South West Song Fest



Welcoming LABBS' Chair, Sue Ranson

# Looking back and looking forward

**With October coming around very quickly**, Cheshire Chord Company is dedicatedly preparing for Convention 2023. In between rehearsals, we have indulged in some fun activities and celebrations!

This year marks a significant milestone for Cheshire Chord Company as we celebrate our 30th anniversary. To commemorate this special occasion, after a day of rehearsals, we followed it with a delightful evening filled with delicious food, refreshing drinks, and energetic ceilidh dancing!

As we reflect on the past 30 years, we find plenty of cherished memories and milestones that have contributed to the growth and success of our group. Here's to many more years of harmonious singing, camaraderie, and continued success. We're sure our passion for music and the joy of sharing it with others, will only grow stronger in the years to come.

The first half of 2023 has seen us expand the ranks by welcoming some new members. For anyone reading this now that has recently joined LABBS, let us tell you, barbershop singing is the best hobby in the world and we know that both you and our new members are going to have the best time!

With excitement and anticipation building up, we are eagerly looking forward to October, when we will take the Convention stage in Harrogate. We look forward to seeing you all then – you'll find us in the bar with a song or two so please come and join us!

Make sure you keep up-to-date with everything Cheshire Chord by following our social media pages [@CheshireChord](#).

**Julie Phillips, PRO**  
Cheshire Chord Company



Cheshire Chord's new members, Kat, Jess, Bernie and Sophie

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**Deadline for next edition:  
Friday 3rd November 2023**

Please send all submissions to [voicebox@labbs.org.uk](mailto:voicebox@labbs.org.uk)

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

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

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

**2023 Deadlines:** Friday 26th Jan, Friday 26th April, Friday 26th July, Friday 1st Nov

# Summertime fun!

## It's been a really busy

**summer** for the Chordettes Acappella Chorus, so it's hard to know where to begin!

### *Concert for the RNLI*

May found us performing a concert to raise funds for the RNLI at Teignmouth Pavilions. We really enjoyed singing for our packed house, and we're delighted to have raised over £1,400 for this most worthwhile charity that helps to keep us all safe when in and around the water.

### *Celebrating Long Service*

May also saw us host a joint presentation evening with Blackdown Acapella, to celebrate our Long Service Award recipients. Congratulations on 25-years membership to our lovely Jenny who now sings with Blackdown Acapella, and to equally lovely 30-year award recipients, Yvonne and Joan.

### *South West Song Fest*

Into June and our wonderful friends, the gorgeous GraceNotes Acapella, organised a brilliant day of singing and learning for the group of choruses in the south west. We had an absolute blast and really enjoyed seeing old friends and making new ones. We really hope this can be a regular event - thank you GraceNotes for making it happen!

### *Summer Fete*

Late June saw us holding our Summer Fete at The Den on Teignmouth seafront. It was a roasting hot day but the wind still managed to catch us out and try to help the tea tent lift off! We managed to keep it anchored down and served delicious homemade cakes and cream teas (the Devon way of course!), with a good variety of stalls to keep our visitors entertained.

### *We all went to the Zoo!*

In July we helped Paignton Zoo celebrate its centenary as part of their "Big Zoonanza" weekend. It was a lovely day, and they did let us all out again so that was a bonus!

### *Stop the press!*

Right at the end of July we had another milestone presentation with Vauldene (Vo) receiving her 35-year Long Service Award. Vo has been a dedicated member of our chorus since 1988 and is an integral part of our team to this day; she's our pitch-piper and until recently, our bari section leader. As well as celebrating Vo's long service, we also celebrated our two newest members, Laura and Dana, who received their LABBS membership badges.

**Amy Hedger, PRO**  
**Chordettes Acappella Chorus**



Congratulations to Long Service Award recipients, Yvonne, Joan and Jenny (L-R, centre)



Fun with the Chordettes



Congratulations to Vo (7th from left), Laura (5th from left) and Dana (5th from right)

# Coast to Coast goes hybrid!

## Coast to Coast has made the momentous decision

to become the country's first Hybrid Barbershop Chorus! Members will meet on Zoom twice a month for eight months under Musical Director Angela Sanchez-Rosemurgey, and four times in-person for a weekend coaching retreat, a Polecat Jamboree, and two live-streamed physical rehearsals. Chris Wilkin, Coast to Coast Chair, explains:

"Members were finding it increasingly difficult to get to Leicester each month with rising travel costs and unreliable services. With the pandemic disruption and other social factors, on-line rehearsals were much better attended than physical rehearsals, so we decided to focus on these but still meet in-person four times a year. We will learn new songs as well as singing polecats, and hope that other LABBS members who find getting to rehearsals difficult, or who would like an additional dose of

barbershop, will join us. The more the merrier!"

This development is the latest in Coast to Coast's long history. In 1987 Sandra Hillyard asked Cath Morton if she would help create and direct a large chorus to enable those in small choruses to experience large-chorus singing, and to give those in non-competing choruses the chance to sing on the Convention stage. Cath agreed, and Sandra found a venue in Leicester. Amazingly, as long-time member Marion Morley recalls, over 100 came to the first meeting!

Cath commented, "I thought it was miraculous how members came from far and wide in droves every month, prepared and ready to sing. The 20 years I directed them were filled with fun and love."

Chorus trips at home and abroad were numerous, and included IABS in 1992. In 2017 we celebrated our 30th

Anniversary, welcoming back former MDs Cath (with Assistant MD, Pauline Corrieri) and Delyth Knight, to cut the anniversary cake with Angela. During lockdowns we kept going with on-line Polecat Frenzies open to anyone in LABBS, and in June 2023 members from 13 clubs enjoyed a wonderful Polecat Frenzy Jamboree day.

We are very excited to embark on this hybrid on-line/in-person journey. We are most grateful to all the directors, members, and supporters who have made the chorus so successful in the past, and would love to welcome new members. Zoom rehearsals are held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. The cost for these and the live rehearsals is just £5 per month. Please email [membership@singcoast2coast.co.uk](mailto:membership@singcoast2coast.co.uk) to find out more - we'd really love to see you!

**Christine Kyriacou, PRO  
Coast to Coast**



Polecat Frenzy Jamboree, 2023



Coast to Coast's first MD, Cath Morton



Coast to Coast at IABS



Our 30th Anniversary cake



# A great start to the summer for the Crystals!

**In May 2023**, we had the pleasure of singing at the Alderley Edge Music Festival. This was the first Crystals singout for three of our members, Sophie, Sara and Judy. And what a way for them to start - we won with a cracking score and had a crying judge. The power of music is amazing!

We had the pleasure of coaching from David Sangster, not once, but twice! He was so great in May that we invited him back in July. If you've not met David, he is a kind, fun, certified musical genius. He gave us so many tips and ideas for moving towards Convention 2023, and we've been loving putting his advice into action over the summer.

In June we had Prelims and we are chuffed that both Barberlicious and Hat-Trick made it through to the semi-finals. We are so proud to have them as part of our chorus and can't wait to support them in October.

**Laura Orton, PRO**  
**Crystal Chords**



L-R\_ Monica Funnell (MD) with first time Crystals Sophie Gosling, Sara McCrudden, and Judy Ashcroft



David Sangster with Crystal Chords

# Mance's marvellous musical magic

## Fascinating Rhythm

**attended** an intensive coaching weekend with Rob Mance on the 20th and 21st of May.

Rob was last with Fascinating Rhythm in April 2022, and the chorus was keen to meet him again and show him the results of the hard work members had put in. They definitely made Rob smile, and he remarked that the chorus had made a significant step change in vocal quality since he last visited. Rob also recognised the amazing work that the musical team had championed to gain this improvement.

All chorus members have worked incredibly hard over the last year, incorporating straws, using TE Tuner, and working on their own personal vocal instruction (PVI) to make vocal improvements. Rob was able to build on the work already done, and this time around focussed Fascinating Rhythm on pitch accuracy and breathing.

By the afternoon of day one, Fascinating Rhythm had identified some areas to work on in relation to pitch intervals, Rob had assessed the entire choir,

giving new PVIs where needed, and he undertook a full assessment for effective riser placement. The new sound was awesome!

Fascinating Rhythm members were keen to get back to work on day two. During the warm-up, Rob remarked that he noticed an improvement just from the previous day. The session focussed on breathing, and most importantly, how to breathe effectively as a singer and how to relax. Understanding the anatomy of breathing was very useful, and Rob was able to dispel a few barbershop breathing myths. Fascinating Rhythm are completely floored by Rob Mance, as he teaches effective breathing technique for singing.

MD Jo Thorn commented: "The weekend was incredibly rewarding and the vocal quality produced by the end of the weekend was sublime. We've worked so hard over the past year and it was so encouraging that Rob recognised the significant improvements we have collectively made."

Chorus members remarked how relaxed they felt when singing on the risers,



Jo and Rob

and how this helped them produce the best sound. Rob commented that it was inspiring to see the growth of the group.

Fascinating Rhythm has plenty to work on before Rob returns to coach them in September, and look forward to achieving further vocal improvement.

**Chloe Roberts, PRO  
Fascinating Rhythm**



Sleeping lions

# GEM Connection's 25th birthday anniversary celebrations

**In May the GEMs celebrated** our 25th Birthday Anniversary with a party.

The evening was attended by the current lineup of GEMs as well as many former GEMs. It was so great to see everyone and catch up with ladies we hadn't seen for a while. The risers were packed with sparkly GEMs past and present, and the sound was amazing. I am sure the trip down memory lane by the GEMs who hadn't sung for a while reminded them how fantastic it is to sing as part of a large group.

Next, there was a GEM quiz. The room was split into four groups, there were some great questions about GEM over the 25 years alongside factoids and memories which made the room erupt into laughter.

The evening would not have been complete without refreshments, including delicious sandwiches and of course cake, lots of cake! The evening was rounded off with one of our latest songs performed by the current GEMs, Bridge Over Troubled Water.

Carrying on our birthday celebrations took us into June with our 25th Birthday Anniversary Show which was a complete

sell out. With the second half of our performance, we wowed our audience with our dynamic 'cabaret' package. Joining us for our show were the fabulous Grand Central Chorus, BABS 2022 Senior Quartet Gold Medallists, Midnight Train, and our very own Ruby Tuesday.

We invited our new LABBS Chair, Sue Ranson, who had the privilege of presenting Long Service Awards to three of the GEMs, our dynamic Chorus Director Rachael Murphy, long time bari Burnie Dawes, and Jenny Smedley, Baritone Section Leader amongst other roles too numerous to mention. All received their award for 35 years as LABBS members.

Straight after our show we held a free Taster Session and recruited three new members. We are now ready to start our preparations for Convention and hope that our new 'Gemettes' will be ready and excited to be singing with us all on stage in October.

See you there!

**Jenny Smedley, PRO**  
**GEM Connection**



35-year Long Service Award recipients' Burnie Dawes, Rachael Murphy and Jenny Smedley

# South West Song Fest 2023

## Despite being a fairly awful year for socialising,

2021 did have a huge barbershop highlight: hosting the South West Hub for LABBS' Unconventional Convention. Our hub was so memorable we all wanted to do it again. And so we did!

GraceNotes Acappella huddled together under the direction of our Events Manager Kate Crichton, and outgoing Chairperson Sandra Matanle, and with support from LABBS in the form of a Regional Event Grant, we planned a music festival to rival Glastonbury!

On 10th June, south west choruses The Chordettes from Newton Abbot, River City Chorus from Exeter, Celtic Chords

from Truro, our newest singing sisters Blackdown Acapella from Chard, and of course us, GraceNotes, met in Plymouth for lots of singing and socialising at our festival.

As the hosting chorus, we arranged for South West Song Fest to include sectionals for a new piece of music, *Welcome Song*, and the new LABBS polecat, *With A Little Help From My Friends*, as well as a mass sing and a repertoire showcase. We held a tombola and had copious amounts of tea and cake, too!

The MDs started as they meant to go on with a variety of fun warm-ups. And, after our sectionals, we got to enjoy singing polecats together, with the five

chorus MDs and our own AMD, Kate Ansell, sharing the directing duties. Getting the opportunity to direct such a huge group of barbershoppers was definitely a thrill for GraceNotes MD, Heidi Walsh!

After lunch in the sunshine we all enjoyed performances from each chorus, and were once again awed and impressed by what south west singers can do.

The opportunity to see and sing with each other again was fantastic, and South West Song Fest kicked off festival season perfectly!

**Shellie Joynes**  
GraceNotes Acapella



Blackdown Acapella's MD, Kirstie Spencer, leading us in some fun warm-ups



Clockwise from top left: South West Song Fest tenors, leads, baris and basses

# Three's great company!

## Harmony InSpires, Synergy, and Oxford

**Harmony** combined forces on Saturday 8th July for *An Evening of A Capella, From Ballads to Barbershop*. This first combined initiative took place at Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, and was a roaring success, thoroughly enjoyed by performers and audience alike!

The concert was the culmination of a busy week for Harmony InSpires, following another successful weekend of

coaching with the lovely Sally McLean. This quarter, Harmony InSpires has also been delighted to sing at a local wedding and has benefitted from the wise and wonderful tuition of LABBS' performance coach Alison Z.

As well as the hard work towards perfecting performances, several social events have been enjoyed, including an evening at The Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot, and an evening meal at The Merry Miller pub in Cothill. More socials are set for the summer!

**Rachel Buglass, PRO  
Harmony InSpires**



At the wedding



From Ballads to Barbershop

# A good start to the summer for Junction 14

## Our Summer events began with

a wonderful weekend of singing and coaching at The Holiday Inn East in Milton Keynes, very near to the actual Junction 14 of the M1. Our lovely Lead Section Leader, Debbie stood in as our temporary MD and did a fantastic job. We spent two days being coached by the wonderful Simon Lubkowski, who is a BABS singing judge. We loved Simon's entertaining warm ups, his enthusiasm, teachings, and sense of fun. He filled us with

confidence and reignited the fire within our chorus. The hotel had a wedding on the Saturday afternoon and the wedding party asked us to surprise the bride and groom with a song! So, a few of us turned up in the courtyard whilst they were having photos taken and we sang *Heart of my Heart*. We even managed to make the bride cry (in a good way!). They thoroughly enjoyed their surprise.

On the 4th July, we had the honour to be part of the Baton of Hope suicide

prevention and awareness initiative. Milton Keynes was one of the chosen cities to take part in this event. We sang three songs as the Baton was handed over at one of the chosen stages. We were positioned at the end of the Walk of Remembrance, and although it rained it didn't dampen our spirits. A first for Junction 14, to perform in the rain! We dried off in the pub afterwards!

**Val Hutchinson, PRO  
Junction 14**



Coaching with Simon



Singing in the rain

# Another busy season!

**Summer was a busy time** for the Red Rosettes. Amongst many singouts and events, there were a few standout moments.

We attended the Annual Lytham Choral Festival for the first time. Twelve choirs performed and we learned a lot from watching others. The Adjudicator was extremely complimentary about our performance and we received a standing ovation so that was a real boost.

You may remember our Bandstand Bonanza from last year (if not, you can read about it in [Autumn 22 VoiceBox!](#)). Despite the wind and rain, we did something similar in June. We toured around

all the supermarkets in our local area for our Supermarket Challenge, raising over £350 for our chosen charity, Helen House, a women's refuge in Chorley. We thoroughly enjoyed singing for the shoppers, and our day walking from store to store covered almost four miles! We were delighted to be joined by our very supportive LABBS Chair, Sue

Ranson, who lives in the area. See if you can spot her in the chorus enjoying our singout with us.

Three of the Red Rosettes also completed the Morecambe Bay Walk, raising another £300 for our charity. A wonderful, if rather wet experience, and a definite tick off the Bucket List.



As we move into autumn, we're looking forward to seeing you all at Convention. We can't wait to see what costumes people come up with for our Tea Party! Good luck to you all with your preparations.

**Ann Atkin**  
The Red Rosettes

## Velvet Harmony concert review

**Velvet Harmony performed an entertaining** and well received concert at St. Mary's Church in Shortlands on July 4th.

The repertoire included old favourites, such as *Mr Sandman*, and also many songs new to the chorus. A talented octet gave polished performances of *Let Me Be There* and *San Francisco Bay Blues*, which were much appreciated by the audience.

It was exciting to hear modern songs sung in barbershop style such as *You Gotta Be* and *Shine*, which helped to make the concert varied and entertaining for all ages.

The chorus particularly enjoyed singing the song *Sister Act*. They introduced it by explaining that the song embodies the friendship and support that chorus members feel they get from each other.

During the evening Jacqui Edwards, our LABBS Liaison Officer, presented a well-deserved Long Service Award to Jane Livesey, recognising her 40 years as a member of LABBS. This fantastic achievement was warmly applauded by both her fellow chorus members and the audience.

Velvet Harmony are now working towards performing at various charity events in the near future, such as an event with St. Christopher's Hospice in September.

**Diane Carrington**  
Velvet Harmony



# Summertime with a Silver Lining

**The summer has been a little damp so far, hasn't it?** But as the saying goes, just look for the Silver Lining! And what a great time we have had.

We had an amazing time at Harmony College with 24 of us taking part across all streams. It was so lovely to have the time to get to know each other better, and to get to know the seven new members who've joined since Covid lockdown. The Blue Chorus contingent however, felt that Jacqui Dyos needed to come out of her shell and let herself go a little, as you can see from the photo below:



The Blue Chorus contingent, with Jacqui taking centre stage!



The EQers thanking 'Jacko' for her direction and coaching



Eris, thinking hard about which part she wants to sing!



Jo Byrne and Carole Shiner 'help' serve up the clotted cream at our annual Songs and Scones event

We said hello too, to our newest member, Eris. She is attending rehearsals with her mum and has many aunts to have a cuddle. As yet she has not decided if she will follow her mum into the world of tenor or her dad into the world of baritone.

We congratulated two medal winners from our chorus too: Jane Grant and the Weird Sisters quartet on their SABS bronze, and Heather Morton and Lux A Cappella mixed chorus on their BABS bronze.

Our 'Songs and Scones' event is a regular favourite: home made cakes, scones, and cream dished out by members, and singing! This year we performed our socks off for our audience on what was a very hot day!



The weather has taken us full circle and at the time of writing we have a gentle drizzle as Silver Lining looks forward to some summer Christmas repertoire rehearsals, a little coaching, and the build up to Convention. We can't wait!

**Heather Morton, PRO  
Silver Lining**



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# Summer in the (Welwyn Garden) City

## It's already been a busy

**summer** for Welwyn Harmony, with a concert, coaching with talented Performance Judge Kirsty Williams, a day singing around the lovely village of Ashwell, participating in an evening hosted by Capital Connection, and having two quartets competing in Prelims for the first time! We've also recently welcomed some new members to our ranks from our latest Love to Sing Course.

Sadly, we've had to say a fond farewell to our Director, Nickie James, who stood down at the end of May. It's been a wonderful four and a half years with Nickie, who led us to our 'Most Improved Chorus' award at Convention 2019, and other successes. We extend our grateful

thanks and wish Nickie all the very best for her future plans.

Our Assistant MDs, Gitta and Cath, have more than ably stepped into the breach and directed us in our Summer Concert Extravaganza, where we sang the majority of our repertoire including *A Thousand Years* from the *Twilight* trilogy, which was the song for our recent Love to Sing Course. At this fun show for our friends, family, and the local community, we were delighted to welcome the amazing quartet, Frisson. Andrew, Cathy, Di, and Helen wowed the audience with an assortment of songs from *Video Killed the Radio Star* to *She's Always a Woman*. At the end of their set members of Strictly A Cappella, (who just happened to be in the audience!), joined them onstage to perform the perfect summer song: *Mr Blue Sky*.

Also participating in the show were Dams 'n Jam quartet, featuring Linda M, Linda V, Rosemary, and Jill, who met while singing with Welwyn Harmony. This performance was their dress rehearsal before Prelims, where they won the LABBS Seniors Contest! Another quartet, Nightingale, featuring Welwyn Harmony members Cath and Jules, outgoing MD Nickie, and Amersham A Cappella's MD Helen Lappert, made it through to the Quartet Semi-Finals in October! Congratulations to both quartets.

We're looking forward to our next steps as a chorus, more summer singouts, and seeing our friends at LABBS 2023!

**PRO Team**  
**Welwyn Harmony**



Frisson



Coaching with Kirsty Williams



Dams 'n Jam



Welwyn Harmony's summer concert

# 25 years of fun!

**I would like to thank** Jacqui Edwards for coming to Arun A Cappella in Bognor Regis to present me with my 25 year pin and certificate. How time flies when you are having fun!

It has been challenging and fun, but above all I have met some lovely, helpful ladies over the years. Having welcomed several new members at Arun A Cappella, I hope they will have many happy years with us as I have, and come to Bournemouth with us next year too!

**Linda Strike**  
Arun A Cappella



Jacqui and Linda

## Techie Corner (not really) - Websites!



### Is your club or quartet considering revamping their website?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Debi Cox**  
LABBS Liaison Officer and  
Web Manager





### Joyce Stroud, 1960-2023

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our dear friend and chorus member of over 30 years, Joyce Stroud.

Joyce was such a talented and hardworking member of Arun A Cappella, and a LABBS Music Judge. We will miss her friendship, dedication, voice and knowledge immensely. God bless you Joyce, sing with the angels.

**Madeleine Branson**  
**Arun A Cappella**

### Margaret Shannon, 1946 - 2023

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Margaret 'Mags' Shannon, who sang with GraceNotes Acapella (formally Brunel Harmony) for many years.

Before joining GraceNotes, Mags sang with a number of barbershop groups in Plymouth. She gained immense joy from singing and performing, and shared so many happy occasions with us all.

Unfortunately she battled cancer for a number of years which robbed her of her singing. However, she always

attended our concerts and events and loved supporting us.

She will be fondly remembered for her sense of fun, her love of singing, and her friendship.

We will miss her smiley face, always.

Rest in peace lovely Mags.

**Gill Phillips, Chair**  
**GraceNotes Acapella**



### Rachel Carr, 1938-2023

Sadly, we lost a former Red Rosette, Rachel Carr, this summer after a long illness. Older members described her as 'the life and soul of the party'.

We were honoured to sing at her funeral and we are sure she will be leading the Heavenly Choir!

**Ann Atkin**  
**The Red Rosettes**



# SEEKS A NEW MD!



Established in 1989, Welwyn Harmony is the only ladies' Barbershop Chorus in Hertfordshire. We are a 30- strong, fun-loving chorus who always strive for improvement.

We perform 4-part a cappella arrangements of popular songs from the start of the 20th Century to the present day at local events, private functions, music festivals and the national Barbershop competition .

Our rehearsals take place in Welwyn Garden City on Tuesday evenings.

For more information, please email [info@welwynharmony.co.uk](mailto:info@welwynharmony.co.uk)

## MUSICAL DIRECTOR WANTED!

### Could this be you?

This is an exciting opportunity to join the amazing Zero Degrees Chorus, a dedicated and hard-working chorus who are ready to share their enthusiasm for performing in close harmony and barbershop style.

We are looking for someone who will work with us to develop both vocal and performance skills, and lead us at rehearsals, performances, workshops and recruitment events, as well as at local and national competitions. We rehearse in Louth, Lincolnshire on Thursday evenings.

For more information, please contact Norma Kirkpatrick at [zdcteam0@gmail.com](mailto:zdcteam0@gmail.com)



[www.zerodegreeschorus.com](http://www.zerodegreeschorus.com)