

Voice Box

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



Winter 2024 £4

Seaside Singing Success!



Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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Chair's Foreword

When you receive this, I am sure you will be deep in the Christmas bustle, but as I write I am in the immediate post-convention dip. We had a fantastic convention, and we owe a great debt to all the volunteers who gave so much time and energy to the event. I hesitate to write a list because it will not be complete, but two things stand out to me this year. The generous people who led the new HC@C sessions, enjoyed by many of us, and the enormous work put in by our Events Director Kristina Mair. Thank you all!

If you have time or a skill that you can share, the Association is always looking for people to help with various elements of our work. Marketing and Communication and Events in particular both need people in a variety

of roles. Maybe a bit of volunteering could be your New Year's resolution for 2025? And if you think someone else is just the person for a role with the Association, please give them a nudge!

We continue to plan for our 50th Anniversary in 2026. Again, as I write, the consultation form is still open for members' comments but by the time you read this, I hope that we will have a draft outline of the celebrations in hand. Please save the date, it's the weekend of 30th October 2026. We would love to see as many of you there as possible. The Association continues to grow, and the future of British Barbershop is looking bright. We continue to work with our friends from BABS in all sorts of areas and the LABBS Board will continue to consult members



on any future plans or changes which may be suggested. It is your Association, and the Board is very mindful of this in all our discussions.

I hope you have a wonderful time over the Christmas holiday, best of luck for all your singouts, concerts and parties, and I wish you all the best for 2025.

Happy New Year!

Sue Ranson
LABBS Chair

Update from your Editor

Congratulations to everyone who crossed the stage in Bournemouth. As we all know, behind the short time we spend on stage is an exciting year-long journey of coaching, camaraderie and creative thinking. I've absolutely loved reading about all the preparations for the Convention stage and all the other endeavours

our members get up to besides. Thank you to everyone who has supported me in the editor's role so far, and to all those who have already listened or contributed to the new podcast, which you can find here: <https://www.labbs.org.uk/podcasts> Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Victoria Chin
VoiceBox Editor

**Deadline for next edition:
Friday 31st January 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, 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](#).

2025 Deadlines: Friday 25th April, Friday 25th July, Friday 7th November

Introducing Kate Middleton as LABBS Director for Diversity & Inclusion

I know a lot of people in the barbershop world, both in LABBS and Sweet Adelines – but you and I might not know each other, so **this is me** (I'm going to see how many song titles I can fit into this article).

When I first visited a barbershop chorus in 2009 I wasn't convinced I could sing at all. Then I was voice-tested and put in the bass section and **at last**, singing started to make sense. That's why I couldn't sing along to the songs **on my radio!** Since then, I've been able to **sing sing sing** with Spinnaker Chorus, with Cascade Chorus, and outside of barbershop with a mixed voice acapella choir called Folks in Harmony. At Spinnaker I was Vice Chair for 9 years, and at Cascade I was Chair for a year. On a personal level, I've been married for 42 years, am mum to two grown-ups who I'm so very proud of (one of whom is neurodiverse) and am grandma to three **beautiful** boys aged 4 and younger. In my work life I started out working in the NHS as a medical secretary, eventually managing hospital complaints for the Chief Executive where I gained an insight into the law and decided I'd like to find out more. I found a part time law degree that meant evening lectures and a lot of work in-between. One particularly challenging year, our eldest was doing 'A' levels, youngest was doing GCSEs and I was doing my final exams. In my Trainee years in 2005/2006 I realised that employment law was my thing, and I was lucky enough to find a job in a niche firm that gave me great experience. By the time I retired in December 2022, I was running my own little niche firm Middleton Law Ltd, which is **still going strong**. I set up my firm when my dad was ill and I needed more flexibility in my working life to support him and mum. After retiring in December 2022 I've stayed on the **busy side of life** (that one's a slight misquote!), I now wonder when I could fit work in! I've been able to do more singing, learn new skills with friends, we've bought a caravan (we go away roughly once a month), look after grandsons one day every week (with **grandad**), and now I've been appointed to the LABBS Board, which is **amazing**. **I'm so excited** to have this opportunity to give back to our fantastic organisation. **What's D&I got to do with this?** (another slight misquote!) I've met, worked with, or generally known a huge range of people over time, and am accepting of everyone on their own merits. In employment law I worked a lot with discrimination cases in **all kinds of everything** (remember that song?). I'm aware of the characteristics that are protected in law, of course, having worked on cases that were grounded in them **over the years**. I'm also aware of times when the law is not the answer, and a large dose of kindness and consideration or thoughtful communication goes a long way towards finding a resolution or welcoming new ideas and personalities.

There's something I'd like from you, please. I'm looking for feedback about whether a quarterly Forum to update and support choruses with Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) issues would be helpful. A very quick email would be great to let me know if your chorus D&I lead would be interested. It would be over Zoom or something similar, so not too onerous.



I'm a believer in everyone being able to feel included, worthwhile, with plenty to give and receive from this **wonderful world** of barbershop, and look forward to helping to develop and build on the work already done by my predecessors, adding to it with my own flair and insight. I hope to have a quick chat with as many of you as possible at Convention on quartet day, so you can feel you can **count on me** when needs be. I'm **easy** to get in touch with by email on diversity@labbs.org.uk Even if I'm in the middle of a field in the caravan, I'll reply as soon as I can!

Kate Middleton
LABBS Diversity and Inclusion Director

Visit to Pitchpipers

As a fairly recently appointed Director of LABBS, the thought of going to visit another chorus was intriguing. What a lovely thing to be able to do, but also slightly worrying as I wouldn't know what they'd want to ask me about!

I had no reason to be worried when visiting Pitchpipers Chorus. What a fabulous welcome from them, and what lovely people. Pitchpipers has been in existence for many years and is going strong. The Musical Director, Robin Hall, is enthusiastic about a capella singing and is bringing them on in leaps and bounds. There was a really friendly energy in the rehearsal hall, and the half time cup of tea was a chance to chat with them all. What a treat! Thank you to Pitchpipers for making me feel so 'at home' with you, and for getting me to present a new member with her badge. Singing a few polecats with you was so very special as well.

Pitchpipers rehearse on a Tuesday evening in Christ Church Hall, Cosham, Waterlooville, Hampshire. For further information please see their website at www.pitchpipers.co.uk

Kate Middleton
LABBS Diversity and Inclusion Director



New member Sheila Gill being presented with her name badge by Kate



Off with Her Head!

Junior Fascinating Rhythm (JFR) have been

involved in a project quite different from their usual activities.

It all began last February when a former JFR helper discovered a collection of Cinderella costumes in her loft and returned them to the group. This sparked a flood of wonderful memories from eleven years ago when some of our oldest daughters, now twenty, and some of our youngest, took to the stage for the first time to perform a musical version of Roald Dahl's Cinderella – a dark and humorous retelling of the classic fairy tale. Remembering how much fun it was the first time round; we wanted to offer this opportunity again to our current group.

"I can honestly say that my heart is bursting with pride for these incredible girls" said Wendy Howse, MD of JFR. With seven songs learnt in two-part harmony, some in three, the girls were really able to show off their vocal skills and all the main characters performed solos. *"They all stepped outside their comfort zones—where we know the real magic happens. They've pushed their boundaries and tested their performance skills, resulting in soaring confidence and unforgettable memories."*

All the volunteers who give their time each week at JFR, had an important role to play, from supporting the singing, organising costumes and props, writing harmonies, the PR for the show, and supporting in the wings.

Special recognition goes to Anna Marshall. As a mother of twins, Anna joined JFR just over two years ago to lend a hand when we were short on adult helpers. She has truly excelled as



director of this production. Her knowledge, organisation, and 1-2-1 work with the girls has been remarkable. From managing logistics and enlisting her husband for tech support to securing a grant from [Chipping Sodbury Rotary Club](#) and coordinating with [Hawkesbury Upton village hall](#), her contributions have been invaluable.

Anna is a true superstar, and while we're a team, we couldn't have done this without her leadership.

We've had some tremendous feedback:

"I thought the performance by the girls was excellent, we very much enjoyed it. Just as important it was clear that the

girls enjoyed performing, which was great to see. It was Cinderella but not as we know it! The Prince beheading the Ugly Sisters was a surprise! At least Cinderella lived happily ever after and would not go short on jam!"

Richard from Chipping Sodbury Rotary Club

"Thank you for giving the girls such precious memories. They are still buzzing".

Proud Parent.

**Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm**



'Vi-queens' raid at Bournemouth Convention!!

Skol! Skol! Skol! as the Vikings say to urge each other on. What a memorable weekend Amersham A Cappella had at convention. We were thrilled to become the LABBS Champions and to be awarded the highest ever marks since the competition began. And to win in all three judging categories was, for us, like finding Viking treasure!

But as in the Norse epic sagas, it has been a real journey. The Captain of our good ship Amersham A Cappella, Helen Lappert, loves all things 'Queen' and plotted a route to commissioning David Wright to arrange our two songs, 'Good old fashioned lover boy' and 'Who wants to live forever'. And what arrangements he created for us! They really have

challenged us and enabled us to explore all the possibilities within them. We were also very lucky to have David and Sandi come to coach us for our retreat weekend.

It's all hands on deck when it comes to preparation. 'Flash' and her presentation team really let their imaginations flow into realising an amazing storyline to bind our songs together. We were moved by it, and I know that the audience in Bournemouth also felt it. The costume team had no small part to play, as creating the concept for over 70 members is difficult and they nailed it. I must mention, not Viking Runestones, but *Rhinestones*. Every costume had them individually glued on – rhinestone parties are a thing here in Amersham! Our newbies are legends. We had

seventeen members who hadn't competed with us before at LABBS and seven of them had never been in a Barbershop Competition before. Long service awards for twenty-five years in LABBS were awarded to Dee Cadge, Lynne Blencowe and Nickie James – more legends!

Congratulations to LABBS for their wonderful organisation and to all who took part in the competitions throughout the weekend. We look forward to representing LABBS this coming year, and to competing in Denver, but for now, we are off with our hoard!

**Amanda Parker, Chair
Amersham A Cappella**



Amersham Vikings



Amersham Newbies



Muddy Stilettoes: Gold Medals, Big Milestones, and Baby Booties!

What a weekend! We're over the moon and so grateful to be your LABBS 2024 Gold Medal Women's Quartet Champions! Winning the gold has been a dream come true, and we're still pinching ourselves! We couldn't be more honoured to bring this title home, and we're beyond excited for the year ahead. Your support has meant the world, and we're truly buzzing about what's next.

When we're not making music, rehearsals are a whole other level of fun and (let's be real) occasional chaos! Our lead is often sneaking in yoga stretches and downward dogs mid-session, we break out into spontaneous dance routines, and there's always plenty of love and laughter!

This year, each of us has also celebrated some incredible personal milestones, making this journey even more special! Our powerhouse lead has been busy not only turning the big 4-0 this January but is also working toward a master's in music therapy – yes, she's singing and studying up a storm. Our tenor also joined the fun with her big 30th birthday back in June, bringing her youthful spirit to every rehearsal! Our fabulous bari is gearing up to turn the big 6-0 this December, and we're planning a celebration worthy of her legendary

energy. Meanwhile, in true Muddy Stilettoes style, our bass has taken on an adorable new gig as a nanny (no word yet on how her lullabies are charting). Last but not least, if you thought you spotted a rather large bump on stage at the weekend, you weren't seeing things – and it wasn't just her love for pies and chocolate! Our tenor is expecting her first baby boy (our little Mudlet), due in January 2025! We're so excited to welcome a new little voice to the Muddy

family.

As we look to the year ahead, we're beyond ready for more harmonies, more laughs, and busting a few more moves! Huge thanks to our amazing barbershop family for all the support, it means the world! Here's to another year of music, memories, and Muddy magic!

Hannah, Colette, Chantel, and Christine Muddy Stilettoes



Convention 2024: Champs, Trophies, and Awards



Gold Medalist Chorus: Amersham A Cappella, recipient of The Brighton Rose Bowl: Champion Chorus, The Peter Caller Award: Large Chorus Division Winner, The E&J Music Trophy: Highest Marks in Music, The Westering Trophy: Highest Marks in Performance, The Liverpool Trophy: Highest Marks in Singing



Mixed Quartet Gold Medalists: The Light Fantastic



Women's Gold Medalist quartet: Muddy Stilettos, recipients of The LABBS Champion Quartet Trophy: Gold Medal Quartet, The Indigo Blue Trophy: Highest Marks in Singing Category, The Pzazz Trophy: Highest Marks in Performance Category, The Crackerjack! Trophy: Highest Marks in Music Category



Silver Medalist Chorus: The White Rosettes, recipient of The White Rosettes Trophy: Second Place



Mixed Quartet Silver Medalist: From the Top



Women's Quartet Silver Medalists: Fifth & Madison, recipients of The Holland Harmony Trophy: Silver Medal Quartet



Bronze Medalist Chorus: London City Singers, recipient of The Harmony Incorporated Trophy: Third Place, The BABS Entertainment Trophy: BABS' selection, for most entertaining chorus, The Red Rosettes Award: Mid-size Chorus Division Winner



Mixed Quartet Bronze Medalists and recipients of the Jen Mills Award 2024: Powerhouse



Women's Quartet Bronze Medalists: Sonic, recipients of The Guildford Harmony Trophy: Bronze Medal Quartet



Acappella Sound, recipient of The Harmony InSpire Trophy: Highest placed chorus combined with the highest percentage of new members



Harmony InSpire, recipient of The Millennium Award: Most Improved Chorus, The Cheshire Chord Trophy: Hari Birtles - Director effecting most improvement in their chorus



Six Town Sound, recipient of The Phoenix Trophy: Small Chorus Division Winner



Recipient of the Katy Phillips Young Barbershopper of the Year Award: Ciara Ayre



Most Improved Director: Hari Birtles

Convention 2024: Choruses



Arun A Cappella



Avon Harmony



Blackdown Acapella



Bristol Fashion



Cambridge Harmony



Capital Connection



Cascade Chorus



The Chordettes Acappella Chorus



Chorus Icení



Cleeve Harmony



Fascinating Rhythm



GraceNotes Acapella



Junction 14



Mic warmer number one: A Slice of Cheshire



Mic warmer number two and mic cooler:
Cheshire Chord Company



Norwich Harmony



Red Rock A Cappella



Rhapsody Chorus



Signature A Cappella Singers



Silver Lining



Spinnaker Chorus



Surrey Harmony



The Belles of Three Spires



The LABBS Youth Chorus

Convention 2024: Women's Quartets



Semi-Final mic warmers: SPLASH!



Semi- Final mic warmer: Fourtuned Cookies



Final mic warmers: Steelettos



Carousel



Flamingo Road



Gin-centive



Horizon



Instigate



Jabberwocky



Tempest



The Firebirds



The Rolling Tones



Wanderlust



Yorkshire Blend



Outgoing Champs: Barberlicious



Jen Mills Award Performance: SpecsAppeal

Convention 2024: Mixed Quartets



Deviate



Hot Ticket



The Sharrow Vale Blues



Spotlight



Crunch Time

Abbey Belles Chorus

As we approach our 30th Anniversary celebration

on 12th October (drum roll please) we have decided to retire our sequins and kit out our Belles in something fresher. Now, the keen Barbershoppers amongst you will know that outfitting the chorus and quartets is all important, and brave is the woman who takes on the clothing of 30 something women, refereeing the many and often scathing comments about her choices. I was prompted to muse on this particular battle by a recent comment: 'Oh! Do you remember those flimsy things? I could never work out how the straps went; I used to lie it on the kitchen table and wriggle into it!' Having written in recent editions about the benefits of singing for our mental health and the advantages of persuading another organisation to pay for your songs (thank you Tesco – we got our £500 for new music and licences) I now offer the Abbey Belles solutions to outfits... Necklaces and earrings – yellow to wear with our blue tops for the Concert for Ukraine and black and

white for our recent outing to the Cleethorpes Music Festival. Although complimented on our styling of white or black Ts with black or white trousers, I do like to think the singing had something to do with our results. And congratulations to the chorus monitors whose duty it was to collect back in all the necklaces before the Wardrobe Headmistress caught up with you. How many ways are there to tie a scarf? Research on Google images reveals many, but the pussy bow doesn't suit everyone. One solution for me was a button effect i.e. the lid from a jar tucked into the scarf and held on with a hair elastic. Don't laugh, it worked for me. One brave member responded to the challenge of footwear for those of us averse to, or let's face it too large for, the gorgeous sparkly stilettos adorning the



feet of our more glamorous members. She recounts hours spent on Amazon choosing and purchasing matching sparkly tape and then working out how to attach it to a £5 pair of pumps from Primark. My biggest ever faux pas, pre-concert, was failing to pack black shoes. Yellow sandals were covered nicely by a pair of black socks - and we all know that they never get dirty. A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do.

**Gillian Swan, PRO
Abbey Belles Chorus**



Abbey Belles – 30 Years in Harmony

This October, the Abbey Belles Chorus celebrated its 30th anniversary with a spectacular show that highlighted the incredible talent and dedication of its members. Founded in April 1994 by local barbershopper Alwyn Pooley, Abbey Belles has transformed from a small group of enthusiasts into an award-winning ensemble, captivating audiences locally and internationally.

The anniversary show showcased the chorus's journey over three decades, featuring not only the main group but also various quartets and small ensembles. "As an MD, all you want is for the chorus to make the sound you know they can achieve, and they truly did just that."

We were excited to feature our two newest quartets, **Picardy Fourth** and **Juniper**, whose performances impressed a packed audience despite their short time together. Another highlight was **Vintage Vocals**, who revisited one of our first ever songs, "Give Me A Barbershop Song," showcasing the timeless appeal of barbershop harmony, including the straw boaters! The lineup also included **Jabberwocky**, presenting their package for an upcoming convention, and **Eclipse**, a dynamic six-piece ensemble known for their infectious energy, performing 'Sound of Silence' and a 'Beach Boys' medley. Adding a delightful twist to the evening was the **Cat Duet**, performed by **The Three Tenors**, who wowed the audience with their whimsical take

on Rossini's duet. Their playful "cat'a wauling" brought laughter and joy to the audience.

Reflecting on this milestone, we are grateful for the friendships formed, skills developed, and memories created. The Abbey Belles' journey has been marked by hard work and passion, and we eagerly anticipate where our love for barbershop singing will take us next. Here's to the next chapter—filled with harmony, laughter, and the joy of music. Thank you to everyone who has been part of our 30-year journey; we can't wait to see what the next 30 years hold.

**Catrina Webb, MD
Abbey Belles**

Avon Harmony gears up to celebrate our 50th Birthday!

As the smallest chorus on stage this year

with four members getting their first experience of a LABBS convention, we were simply glad to have finally made it to the stage after four years away.

It was so uplifting to experience the friendship and fun that is always a big part of convention, and our four newbies all said how friendly everybody was, and how they enjoyed the camaraderie.

Congratulations to our fellow Bristol choruses, Bristol Fashion and Fascinating Rhythm, and especially to Sonic for their bronze medal in the quartet competition.

So many members of both of these choruses, and indeed many others



Avon Harmony 1975

throughout the country, have been members of Avon Harmony since its formation in 1975 and it was lovely to meet old friends and make new ones.

As we celebrate our own Golden Anniversary in 2025, we hope to meet up with the other two remaining founder member clubs of LABBS: The Barberettes and The Chordettes, for some joint celebrations.

We would also like to hear from anyone who has been part of the Avonbelles or Avon Harmony since 1975, so that they can be included in our celebrations next year. Please get in touch with pro@avonharmony.com

Finally, many thanks to everybody who helped to make the 2024 convention such an enjoyable weekend.

**Jackie Boffin, PRO
Avon Harmony**



Cleeve Harmony – Competition and Celebration 2024!

Cleeve Harmony, a choir small but mighty, is what we are, But Convention 2024, was this a bridge too far?

Could we “bring it” in such a setting?

We could bet on us – but who else would consider betting? Sometimes Convention felt like the dragon to our St George – although saints we ain’t!

But we can work flippin’ hard without (much) complaint! When we got to BIC - no dragon in sight

No need to put up a fight.

Energy and enjoyment were in the air – we had not a care! All around us it was a celebration of voices in song, Troubles melted away – nothing was wrong!

Onto the stage, to share our heart, spirit and performance best That was our quest.

We nailed it! The performance was adrenaline city and a fabulous job done!

Not high up on the table, but with our own mission accomplished - we absolutely won.

**Lindsey Draper, Lead
Cleeve Harmony**



Every mutiny has a Silver Lining

One day, somewhere in the South of England there was an event that amazed and shocked in equal measure.

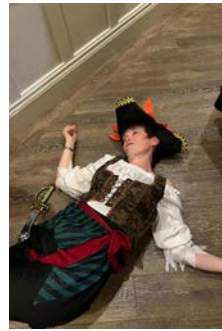
Silver Lining Chorus began in their usual friendly manner, singing 'Get by with a little help from my friends' during their warm-up session and welcoming their new Bari to her first Convention. But after an amazing time on stage, earning their highest score to date, things took a sinister turn, fuelled by a couple of beverages maybe?

The Pirates appeared friendly, but tragedy befell the chorus and our new Lead became the casualty of a mutiny. Fortunately, the next day was sunny and bright, and they all lived to sing another day, another week, another year. Roll on 2025 in Harrogate.

**Heather Morton, PRO
Silver Lining**



Three Friendly Pirates



Rachel Wood



Silver Lining Warm up



Sheila Waterfield, Bari.
Convention First-timer

Believe to Achieve

We did it! We scored higher than we ever had before, and we placed higher than we ever have before! Yes, a medal would have been nice – we'd be kidding you if we said otherwise – but the amazing thing about our hobby is that we can truly appreciate the skill and talent of those around us whilst delighting in our own achievements. A huge congratulations therefore to the awesome Amersham, the wonderful White Rosettes and lovely London City Singers. (That's about all the alliteration we can manage after a weekend like ours). The key this year has been believability – the creation of an authentic, believable performance and a chorus



investing time, honesty, vulnerability and energy into a package whose theme was 'Strong, Powerful Women'. MD, Craig 'Ke-hoe!' Kehoe and his Music

and Performance Team coached each singer through the notes, words and so much more; and with Performance Lead, Debbie Trotman, took it from the page to the stage. There were changes along the way – new discoveries and new meanings. Connecting early in the process with performance coach Kirsty Williams: an extraordinary day where Kirsty and Debbie bounced off of each other with a buzz of understanding and a follow up evening of fine-tuning where things had been stripped back (the 'moves' had become tools to find the feelings and were no longer needed for a truly authentic performance) and Kirsty helped us find the flow of 'thinking' before 'doing'. We were also lucky enough to once again have the charismatic Rob Mance. This year's focus 'HARMONY ROCK' and as always T.E. Tuner plays a role – who knew about the video feature? In fact, videoing has played a large part in helping our chorus bring a visual performance that

vocally matches the sound we produced. With weekly uploads on to YouTube (link access only) we have been able to revisit the rehearsal again and again.



So, did we feel ready? Actually, yes, we did. Having watched our glorious in-house quartet SONIC the day before win a wonderful bronze medal as well as comedy quartet Specs Appeal bring the house down with their Jen Mills Award performance of 'The Jogging Song', we were raring to hit the stage. Dressed in a shade of blue, our own choice of outfit and silver shoes we felt like the strong, powerful women we wanted to convey and when we'd finished, we just wanted to do it all over again. An excellent Convention, forever grateful for our supporters, family and friends and so excited to start planning for next year.

**Debbie Trotman, PRO Team,
Bristol Fashion**

When can we do it again? Bristol Fashion Newbies are raring to go!

Walking out onto the Convention stage

is a massive undertaking for any singer. Legs feel like jelly, mouth is inexplicably dry, and you are eyeballing an audience of your peers who are generously cheering and lending their support. There is also a table of judges, feedback from the announcer's microphone and then the auditorium lights dim as the spotlights glare! Remember to breathe, soft knees and smile your appreciation...

For many of the Bristol Fashion membership, though still daunting, this is not a new experience but for four members of Bristol Fashion this was their first Convention, and they smashed it. With gloriously expressive faces, beautiful voices, kind hearts and wicked senses of humour they have fitted right into the Bristol Fashion family. We asked them how they felt, and this is what they said:

Cleeve (joined after a sad loss): Well, I survived my first convention, despite the nerves and what an amazing experience! What did I enjoy most? The camaraderie and support I received from Bristol Fashion and the love and respect shown by so many at the Convention for our chorus. I had fun despite feeling challenged and stepping outside of my



Clockwise from top left: newbies Jo Deane, Fred Walters, Nicola Farthing and Cleeve Taylor

comfort zone. So proud to be part of Bristol Fashion; such a lovely, caring and inspirational group of people.

Nicola (saw us in a competition, followed us on facebook, came for a Love to Sing course one year later and stayed!): Diary of a first timer! Thanks for the BF love, support, encouragement, fun, challenge and confidence as I dug deep to be my 'true, authentic self' this weekend.

Fred (looked up choirs on the internet): I can't express how at home I felt

throughout the weekend. Even though I was new and felt lost a lot of the time, I knew that if I found someone with a lanyard I would be welcomed and supported. As a special person (neurodivergence and all that) I can struggle with too many people, but I didn't feel overwhelmed at all. I've never felt so at home, and I can't wait to do it again.

Jo (approached a BF friend when she knew the time was right): What a journey! So much joy and love for our chorus. Thank you all for looking after me on our adventures in Bournemouth. I am completely hooked on Bristol Fashion!

Jo also created some videos about her convention journey which we used on Instagram #wonkygrapes. We didn't quite manage the 'Go-Pro' but there is always next year!

We know that across the country there are other choruses with the same newbie joy (especially Acappella Sound's 81% new membership) and Bristol Fashion wish to extend the warmest welcome to this wonderful world of four part harmony and look forward to seeing you all next year!

**Debbie Trotman, PRO team
Bristol Fashion**

Chorus Icen

Wow, Wow, Wow - Chorus Icen had the best time in Bournemouth!!

We were delighted to finish in 8th position after 16th place last time and an increase in our score of 5% for our highest place ever at a LABBS convention.

We would like to thank David Sangster who encouraged and motivated us along the way and of course our wonderful MD

Gaynor who supports and inspires us all each week.

We had three new members on stage who all said that the experience had exceeded their expectations and they are already looking forward to returning to the Convention stage.

As well as the singing our members enjoyed an early morning sea swim, a fabulous organised walk in the glorious



Alison and Rachel



Linsey and Phoebe

sunshine at Studland Bay and partying as pirates.

A huge thank you to LABBS for another fantastic convention.

**Mandy Miller, Assistant Director, Lead
Section Leader, PRO
Chorus Icen**

Comes Convention...

Capital Connection were

back at Convention with four newbies, a returning CapCon gal and an exciting "Love" package! As a diverse chorus, we embraced our individualities by breaking away from the tradition of wearing identical dresses and came on stage feeling fabulous in our own choice of blue and teal outfits! Perhaps it was the outfits, or the morning pep talks or maybe it was that we felt confident as a team, but that day we each walked onto the stage with more energy, passion and pride than ever before.

We absolutely loved showcasing our two new songs, and were delighted by the audience's response to our performance



of 'Comes Love'! As well as that, we were ecstatic to have received our highest score this side of the millennium! Capital Connection have been singing barbershop for several decades now but it may surprise you to know that almost 50% of the chorus joined only after the pandemic - many of whom hadn't sung since they were at school. It's been a steep learning curve for these newer members but also a period of adjustment for established members, who've had to adapt to new voices and personalities in the chorus. However, the camaraderie and sisterhood we have nurtured and developed would have you believing that we've been singing together for years!

That evening, after a celebratory meal back at our hotel, we ventured back to Bournemouth International Convention (BIC) Centre to watch the show and join in with the pirate fun. We enjoyed our sing-off with Fifth Element quartet on our respective versions of 'Comes Love', and singing some of our repertoire songs with a



large group of LABBS pirates (arrrrr!) before retiring to our hotel bar where we indulged in a bit more singing. The next morning, an energetic few were back at the BIC to Sing with the Champs, and to learn some sea shanties whilst the rest of us headed back home, hearts full of joy but utterly exhausted!

It's been a fantastic 2024 for Capital Connection and we can't wait for 2025 - our 40th anniversary year. Bring on the celebrations and the harmonies!

**Sharan Ghuman, Lead
Capital Connection**

Wow! What an autumn it has been.

Fifty-two Red Rosettes

travelled by plane, boat and coach to Killarney to compete in the Irish Association of Barbershop Singers International Chorus competition.

The journey alone was epic and there were many bemused travellers who were serenaded by everything from "Bohemian Rhapsody" to "You'll never walk alone", at the request of some Liverpool supporters. We even received a lovely email from a lady on board the ferry who was so grateful that our singing had taken her daughter's mind off her seasickness. Music can cure anything it seems! We were first onstage for the International competition and we gave it our all. We were absolutely delighted



Chord Red

to be awarded Bronze medals for our performance. Not only that, but we finally broke the 80% barrier we have been so close to for so long.

Some of our chorus have been members for over 40 years and this was their first medal so you can imagine how delighted we were for them. Also we must congratulate our five Newbies who were amazing and, of course, are eager now for more medals!

We had two new quartets, Canberra Road and Chord Red, performing for the first time in Ireland, and they did themselves proud.

A special mention must go to one of our Leads, Jane Howarth, who was hospitalised the night before. She had not slept for over 48 hours, and after they took her drip out, she got in a taxi, put on her Convention costume, and performed onstage with us. She deserved a medal for sheer determination!

It is hard to come back down to earth after such an amazing weekend but we have knuckled down as we are finalists in the Lancashire Choir of the Year competition in November. We came



Canberra Rd

second last time so we are very keen to improve and to take first place. We also have the honour of representing LABBS in Sweden in May. Fundraising is in full swing as you can imagine, including a sponsored walk to cover the equivalent of the 888 miles to Sweden.

That's Barbershop for you. Convention packages and in between, dusting off the Christmas repertoire for our Christmas singouts, including the privilege of singing as guests of the amazing Leyland Brass Band.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Life's a song, we sing it!

**Ann Atkin, Bass
Red Rosettes**



Exhilarating First-Time Experience for Cascade Chorus at LABBS Convention 2024

What an exhilarating weekend for Cascade

Chorus! This year marked a milestone as we crossed the stage for the very first time as a competing chorus at the LABBS Convention, with



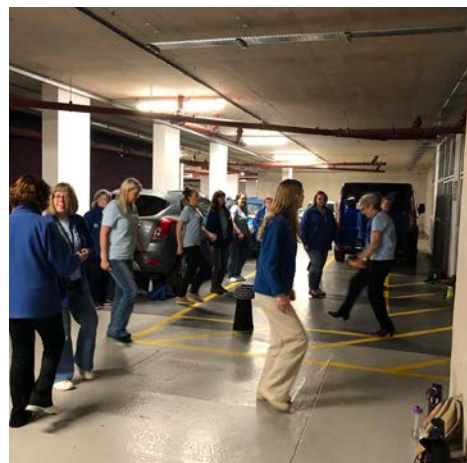
eight members experiencing their first Convention. From start to finish, every moment was unforgettable.

Our journey began in a rather unusual spot: a warm-up session in an underground car park! The acoustics were fantastic and set a thrilling tone for the day ahead. After a scenic hike down the hill, we joined the buzz, watching inspiring performances from other choruses, and soon it was our turn.

With hearts pounding, we stepped into the spotlight with a simple yet powerful goal: to entertain, give it our all, and enjoy every second.

The response we received was beyond encouraging, and with a score of 65.5%, we can proudly say our debut was a success! A massive thank you to MD Deb Thompson for her unwavering support and spirit in getting us stage-ready.

After the excitement of the performance, we capped off the weekend with a lively afterglow party, complete with pirate costumes and laughter in true barbershop style. The camaraderie



Warm up in the car park

and joy shared by everyone made this weekend one we'll never forget.

Here's to Cascade Chorus and to many more thrilling adventures ahead!

Viv Robertson, PRO
Cascade Chorus

Main Street's Year Off...

Main Street Sound have taken a year off LABBS

convention this year. Instead we've been enjoying time together as a chorus, upcycling our repertoire and learning lots of new techniques and skills (and what a larynx does, see Peter Bryant for more...)



We were honoured and privileged to show off our new skills when we were asked to sing at "Fountains By Floodlight" this year. If you have never been lucky enough to see Fountains Abbey, it is a monastery nestled in a valley near Ripon, North Yorkshire and is one of the most well preserved monasteries to survive its dissolution in 1539. The National Trust, throughout October and November, light up the ruins and open them for the public to explore. Local choirs are invited to perform in the evening, and Main Street Sound were delighted to spend a Friday

evening ringing chords in the "Cellarium"- what was the food cellar of the Abbey!

We began with *A Wink and a Smile*, which is full of barbershop goodness and finishes on a rather glorious Add9 chord which we always enjoy giving a bit of welly! This was soon followed by LABBS favourite, *Anthem*. We quite quickly realised what a wonderful space this would be to sing in. The acoustics were certainly to a barbershop advantage and the chords were soon ringing strong.

We then followed with three rather beautiful ballads (if I do say so myself!) We performed *Shenandoah*, arranged by the wonderful Sam Hubbard, which sounded particularly lovely in this space with the river rushing outside the window below.

It felt only right at this time to do a bit of audience participation! MD Peter Bryant introduced the audience to one of our favourite warm up rounds *Rose Red*, and after splitting the audience into groups, we managed to successfully sing a round involving the entire audience!

We then debuted our new song *That Man*, made famous by Caro Emerald on her album *Scenes From the Cutting Room Floor*. It was very exciting to sing such a rhythmic song in this space, and our soloists Lisa, Angie, Jenefried, Janice and Susan did a marvelous job over the "doot, doot-ing" of the backing parts.

It wouldn't have been a Main Street Sound Performance if there wasn't a bit of Queen, so we rounded out the evening with *Somebody to Love*.

Not wishing to leave anyone out, we went to sing for our supper and did an impromptu performance for the catering vans - they don't usually get to hear the choirs but because of the portable nature of Barbershop we were able to treat them to an impromptu Afterglow beneath the stars.

Although we are going to miss you all in Bournemouth this year, concerts like this where we get to introduce audiences to Barbershop definitely give us that warm fuzzy feeling. It was extra wonderful performing at this very special venue. If ever you get a chance to visit you definitely should (day or night!) and perhaps you could sing a note or two in the Cellarium to hear this very special sound for yourself!

Libby Speechley, PRO
Main Street Sound



Our Unforgettable Year: Cheshire Chord Company's Swan Song at LABBS Convention

This year has been

nothing short of spectacular for us at Cheshire Chord Company. After a whirlwind season of hard work, performances, and competitions, we brought it all to an emotional close with our swan song set at the LABBS 2024 Convention.

One of the highlights was our rendition of *Send in the Clowns*, arranged so beautifully by the magnificent Sam Hubbard. Alongside this, we had the joy of performing a *Whitney Houston* medley, also arranged by Sam. Singing and dancing on the LABBS stage to Whitney's iconic hits was a real thrill – it's a medley that never fails to lift our spirits and get our audience on their feet!

Thank you to everyone who joined our *Sing with the Champs* session on the Sunday morning. It was fantastic to see so many enthusiastic barbershoppers coming together to celebrate our hobby. We hope you enjoyed learning *Rhythm is Gonna Get Ya* as much as we enjoyed teaching it. Your energy and passion made the session unforgettable, and we can't wait to sing with you again soon. Keep the rhythm alive!

We want to extend our warmest

congratulations to this year's winners! We know how much dedication and passion it takes, and we're thrilled for every single chorus and quartet that took the stage. To all the volunteers who made this weekend possible – thank you! Your support and tireless effort behind the scenes helped make the convention a huge success.

Onward to Denver – Join Us on Our Next Adventure!

Although our swan song was an emotional farewell, our journey isn't over yet! We're thrilled to share that we'll be representing LABBS in Denver next year. To help fund our journey, we held a pirate-themed fundraiser during the convention weekend, complete with costumes and some fabulous prizes. It was a fantastic weekend of fundraising, and we're so grateful to everyone who joined in and supported us.

If you missed the fundraiser, don't worry – you can still help us make it to



Sing with the Champs

Denver. We've set up a GoFundMe page, and every contribution, big or small, will bring us closer to taking Cheshire Chord Company's harmonies across the pond. Please visit our www.CheshireChord.co.uk for more information.

Thank you for being part of this incredible year. Here's to the memories we've made, the music we'll create, and the friendships that keep us going!

Julie Phillips, PRO
Cheshire Chord Company

Cheshire A Cappella Triumphs at Hazel Grove Music Festival

Cheshire A Cappella

recently shone at the Hazel Grove Music Festival, winning the prestigious John Riches Memorial Shield in the Choral Recital Class! This victory is particularly meaningful, as it marked our first competition with our new Chorus Director, Gill Irwin. Gill's arrival has sparked a new beginning for Cheshire A Cappella, bringing fresh energy, vision, and an inspiring musical direction that is already shaping our future in exciting ways. Under Gill's expert guidance, we delivered an unforgettable performance with a powerful and diverse set, featuring *Shallow* (arr. Sam Hubbard), *Viva La Vida* (arr. Emily Moriarty), and *Seasons of Love* (arr. Liz Garnett). Opening with the emotional intensity of *Shallow*, we captivated both the audience and the judge. We then upped the

energy with the lively, rhythmic *Viva La Vida*, before closing with *Seasons of Love*, leaving the audience moved by our heartfelt harmonies and unified sound. Winning the John Riches Memorial Shield is a significant milestone, symbolising not only our hard work and dedication but also the beginning of this new chapter



Cheshire A Cappella Chorus celebrating their victory

under Gill's leadership. Her vision and dedication have breathed fresh life into the chorus, and there is an unmistakable sense of excitement and anticipation as we look forward to exploring the musical journey ahead with her.

This award reaffirms the strength and spirit of Cheshire A Cappella and the thrill of sharing our music with the community. We are so grateful to the Hazel Grove Music Festival for an incredible experience and to all our supporters for their unwavering encouragement. Here's to many more performances and achievements as we embark on this new journey with Gill Irwin, eager to see the heights we will reach together!

Justine Riches, Website and Social Media Officer
Cheshire A Cappella

A Crystal Rising

It's been a jam packed few months for Crystal Chords, starting with the excitement of a new set of risers and that's despite only deciding to take the plunge earlier in the year. Our committee set about fundraising and selling our existing set of Wengers in the spring and a combination of luck and hard work all came together when



Crystals at LABBS

Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund awarded us a grant in August. To say we were bowled over was an understatement and as you can tell from the picture, the massive cheque they

bought along to present was also a bonus!

The risers arrived in the nick of time for our dress rehearsal before we winged our way over to the Irish Association of Barbershop Singers (IABS) convention in Killarney. We love IABS! It's always such fun and we cheered on our competing quartet Hat-Trick, special guests Barberlicious, and also competed in the international chorus competition. We were delighted with our score and placing from our group of thirty-two and we were also thrilled to watch our Northern sisters the Red Rosettes take home their bronze medal. It was such fun afterglowing with them, we were worn out the next day!

Finally, how we could let this edition go by without mentioning our cracking team of Crystals who represented us at LABBS? We weren't there to compete this year but with Kristina as LABBS Events Director, Nancy as Front of House, Caroline as Volunteer Coordinator, Alison as Emcee for the whole weekend and Barberlicious as outgoing quartet



Manchester Airport Community Trust Grant presentation

champs, we were well represented by those on stage and many more who were there watching and supporting too. As Barberlicious picked up their crown pins on Saturday night, we couldn't be prouder of the role they've played as LABBS ambassadors.

It's no rest for Crystals now though and for winter we are embarking on a Love to Sing course with over thirty people signed up. More on that next time I imagine!

**Alison Liddell, Chair
Crystal Chords**

A Lunchbreak with a difference for Fascinating Rhythm's Charity of the Year, Off The Record, and more fundraising...

Fascinating Rhythm recently ran a

singing workshop to support staff from their charity of the year [Off The Record](#) (OTR). A few of the chorus from each section volunteered to travel to the OTR office and drop-in hub in Bristol, and received a warm welcome from staff, who were looking forward to a lunch break with a difference. Fascinating Rhythm did a few warm-ups to get started and then OTR joined in and before long were feeling "Good Vibrations" throughout the building!

The whole team were new to a cappella singing and really enjoyed the session, and we discovered they also offer music therapy to the teens and young adults who need their support. MD Jo Thorn said: "We were thrilled to support OTR in this fun way – and it was brilliant how quickly they picked up the tunes and were soon singing along. With laughter and smiles all round, it was great to feel we were able to bring some fun and sunshine to their day!"

The OTR staff said:

"Thank you to the ladies from Fascinating Rhythm Chorus for bringing us together for a workshop of fun, laughter and singing!"

We were invited to have a tour of their brightly decorated facilities which offer a safe space for children in Bristol and South Gloucestershire with mental health issues. They offer a range of support from simply somewhere to "be", to resilience workshops, a book club, 1-2-1 therapies from their mental health support team and much more.

We then enjoyed a cuppa and yummy



Left to right: Julie Macnamara (Lead), Ali Jack (Tenor Section Leader), Anne-marie Collier (Chair)

cakes and the chance to talk more with the OTR Team about the support they give. It was heartwarming to see how dedicated and enthusiastic they are in the important roles they play in what must, at times, be a challenging job to do.

A delicious Teddy Bears' Picnic

Anne-marie, joint Chair of Fascinating Rhythm, joined forces with [The Jolly Melodies Music Company](#) (the other hat she wears), to organise a Teddy Bears' Picnic and raise some more money for OTR. Fascinating Rhythm ladies provided the cakes and treats, and a few chorus members were there to help on the two coffee mornings, which were run at the end of term. A whopping £265 was donated over the two days. A delighted Anne-marie said, "Every year I'm overwhelmed by the generosity of my friends from Fascinating Rhythm, who bake such yummy cakes! I'm delighted we raised such a great amount for the Fascinating Rhythm Charity of the Year".

**Julie Macnamara, PR team
Fascinating Rhythm**

Four Convention first timers and first-time mum-to-be

Harmony InSpires chorus members

have thrown themselves into preparing for Convention this year under the direction of their talented Musical Director, Hari Birtles, and the result of 72.4% achieved at Convention showed this.

Joining them for the first time on the Convention stage were new members Ros Merriman, Meg Christian, Dana Greetham and Sophie Power. First time mum-to-be Vicky Thatcher at 36 weeks pregnant sang alongside them for her last performance before her baby's imminent arrival.

Harmony InSpires opened with the well-known 'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend', making it their own



Most Improved Director Hari Birtles

with original choreography. The ballad 'Next Time I Love' followed, giving the chorus an opportunity to convey the emotion of the song and really engage with the audience. The entire chorus and their supporters were later thrilled to

receive two coveted awards. 'Most Improved Chorus' and 'Most Improved Director' for Hari Birtles. In the evening chorus members dressed as various crewmates from the 'Jolly InSpires' to attend Afterglow and celebrate their earlier success.

The chorus continues on its upward trajectory of the last three years, building on the success of last year, and further improving their resulting score this year. They are certainly looking forward to where 2025 will take them.

Harmony InSpires increased its membership this year and while not every new member was able to perform at Convention, the membership has now reached forty-eight, prompting the formation of a fundraising group to raise funds for much needed additional risers <https://gofund.me/b8014051>

This last quarter has given the chorus several enjoyable sing-out opportunities including The Marcham Big Weekend, a prestigious sing-out for Oxford University Hospital's NHS Foundation Trust Staff Recognition Awards, on the stage at Oxford Town Hall and more recently a sing-out at Witney in Pink, where on a single day many local acts performed in pink in support of the charity Against Breast Cancer. The chorus now begin preparing for



future performances starting with Abingdon Christmas Extravaganza in November, and in December, Sobell House Hospice Lights of Love Event.

Caroline Green, Incoming PRO Harmony InSpires



Convention First Timers left to right: Ros Merriman, Meg Christian, Dana Greetham and Sophie Power.

Reflections on the journey to Convention as a first-time barbershop singer

Spinnaker was delighted to welcome

to the Convention stage with us this year, four new ladies who have never sung barbershop before. This is what they had to say about their experience.

Ellie Aldworth

I joined Spinnaker with only 59 days to go until Convention. It was a mad rush to get everything organised in time and this didn't seem like the wisest choice at the time. But boy am I glad I did! Our 6 minutes on stage passed in a blink, leaving me with a rush of adrenaline mixed with relief and a tinge of sadness now it's done. Thank you, LABBS, for a weekend to remember.

Clare Downton

I've returned from my first LABBS convention still kind of thinking, wait what just happened to me! I feel a little overwhelmed by the talent, support and kindness I've just experienced. Being surrounded by harmony is a dream I'd

almost forgotten I've had since I was a child. I'm truly inspired to be the best I can be.

Lou Lynton Evans

An incredible experience! The competition highlighted the strength and unity of women, celebrating our innate wisdom and collective energy. It is inspiring to witness that sense of commitment and empowerment in the ensemble. Going through this process has created a bond I didn't know was missing from my life. Allowing everyone to express themselves and explore personal growth together.

Susan Douglas

Attending my first LABBS convention in October was undoubtedly the highlight of my year so far. It has been such a joy to be singing again and when I heard Anthem being sung in the Bournemouth International Centre by hundreds of like-minded women, I have to admit, I shed a tear at the sheer power of the experience. Now I can't wait for Harrogate next year



Ellie, Clare, Lou and Susan

but in the meantime, I'm just looking forward to singing again regularly with newfound friends.

Ellie, Lead, Clare, Lou and Susan, Bass Spinnaker Chorus
Jo Odell, Membership Secretary Spinnaker Chorus

Squeeze the Day with Second City Sound!

Celebrating 35 Years of Harmony with a Zesty Twist

As Second City Sound

gears up to celebrate its 35th anniversary in 2025, we're adding a splash of citrus to mark the occasion! In a spectacular show at the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Birmingham, we'll welcome none other than the internationally acclaimed quartet, **Lemon Squeazy**, to the stage. With two shows scheduled—matinee and evening—it promises to be a day packed with harmony, humour, and a touch of lemony fun!

In true Second City Sound spirit, we're embracing the lemon theme to spread excitement.



Second City Sound dress up for National Lemon Day

From yellow outfits to lemon-themed promotions, our members have been "squeezing" every opportunity to make this show memorable.

Our daring and fun-loving Music Director, Rob Barber, even dressed up as a lemon at the LABBS convention in Bournemouth, to help spread the word, turning heads and making our zesty plans the talk of the town!



MD Rob Barber

our spirits, at competitions and performances alike.

Get ready for an unforgettable show filled with music and laughter.

Also performing will be the amazing **MALEVOX** under the leadership of Duncan Whinyates, who entertained us all in Bournemouth with his medal winning quartet Fifth Element. In addition, we have the superb Youth Champions mixed Quartet **AMI Quartet**.

Second City Sound has a rich history rooted in harmony and friendship. Founded 35 years ago by the wives of the Anvil Men's Chorus, what began as a few ladies meeting for tea evolved into the powerhouse of barbershop we are today. From those early days, we've blossomed into a chorus known for our unique performances, including our unforgettable Toy Story-themed routine. Under Rob Barber's leadership, we continue to raise our voices and

You won't want to miss it—scan the QR code for ticket details or visit:

<https://www.suttoncoldfieldtownhall.com/events/whats-on/concerts-shows/squeeze-the-day>



Can't wait for you to come and join us to celebrate thirty-five harmonious years with a slice of lemon on the side!

**Julie Cushion, Fundraising and PR team
Second City Sound**

Six Town Sound puts Staffordshire on the Barbershop Map

Wow! What a thrill

Convention was! It was Six Town Sound's first time out on the national stage, and we had a blast both on the stage and off it too! It was brilliant to represent Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire for the first time in LABBS history and put our beloved city of six towns on the barbershop map. We would like to congratulate Amersham A Cappella, The White Rosettes and London City Singers on their Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. What fabulous ambassadors you all are for our amazing hobby and what incredible scores for the top three spots, all scoring 80% and above. A first surely for LABBS. We offer our sincerest congratulations to everyone who crossed the stage over the weekend. We know only too well the hard work that goes into preparing for those six minutes. As for Six Town Sound, fifty percent of our chorus didn't even know what barbershop was twelve months ago, and two years ago, we didn't even exist. We were utterly thrilled to take home the Phoenix Trophy for the best small chorus as well as

placing 6th overall with a score of 75.8% on our debut. What a ride! It was wonderful to receive such a warm welcome and so many comments of encouragement from LABBS' members before we had even taken to the stage. It really demonstrates what an amazing association LABBS is and fosters such a culture of support, camaraderie and friendship. The cheers we received at the end of our set as well as such lovely comments about our sound, really made us feel part of the family. Of course, we were also very lucky to have so many of our members getting involved with convention outside of the competition too. Our very own Assistant MD, Hannah Barber, held a fringe education session on incorporating vocal craft into your warmups. She and our Tenor Section Leader, Andrea Day also performed an amazing set with the QC Chorus on the Saturday night show. To top this all off our beloved leader, the one and only Duncan Whinyates performed with his quartet, Fifth Element, the current



2024 BABS Quartet Champions. Obviously, we yelled our heads off cheering for them! We also gathered to support Sam Wallace who presented the Jen Mills Award to Powerhouse Quartet. Alyson Chaney, who also sings with Lace City, was representing Sweet Adelines Region 31. We have some gigs and some coaching to look forward to now the excitement of Convention is over, as well as heading to Calpe in the Spring to the Barbershop of Iberia Association (BIBA) Convention, and we look forward to sharing lots of tags and songs with both old and new friends.

**Liz Tomkinson, Secretary
Six Town Sound**

Convention 2024 and Junction 14 were back!

It has been a couple of years since we last competed at Convention in 2022. Back then almost a third of our chorus members came down with COVID two days before Convention and were not able to join the rest of us in Bournemouth. Our confidence was shattered, and it showed in the competition results. We have had two years to get back on our feet, together with our wonderful



new MD, Debbie Teague, and equally wonderful Music Committee. This last year we have been honoured to have the amazing Simon Lubkowski travel down to Milton Keynes on numerous occasions to coach us and help with our Convention Package. In the last few months, we also had Voice and Resonance coaching from the wonderful Liz Garnett and on a rehearsal night we had the talented actor, Michael Hutchinson to coach us on performance and expression. So, with a renewed confidence we headed to a sunny Bournemouth for a weekend of fun with our fellow LABBS choruses and quartets. It was Debbie's first time as an MD on the LABBS stage and she did an amazing job, alongside Simon Lubkowski who also supported us on and off the stage for our performance. To our delight, we managed to increase our score from two years ago and climbed a few places up the chorus ladder too. We were back! Special thanks to Simon and everyone at LABBS for making this year's Convention a great success.



Debbie and Simon

And we can't end without giving our huge congratulations to Simon who in Bournemouth this year won a Gold Medal with his mixed quartet The Light Fantastic.

**Val Hutchinson PRO,
Junction 14**

Treasures

The White Rosettes were so pleased to be able to come back to home turf to sing again at Convention after the stupendous time we had at the Barbershop Harmony Society and were thrilled to take second spot in such a fantastic competition. Amersham A Cappella were such worthy champions on the day, with such a great performance, fantastic score and clean sweep of trophies. Bronze medallists London City Singers too brought such energy and skill to the stage, and it was fantastic to see our Katie Lumb - recently moved to London for work - strutting her stuff with them



Cath Morton and Sally

in the front row. Congratulations also go to our fab quartet competition winners Muddy Stiletos, Fifth & Madison and Sonic, and The Light Fantastic, From the Top (go Heather!) and Powerhouse.

The White Rosettes were delighted with their silver medals, but that's not everything. Every barbershopper puts a lot of time and effort into competition because we're all trying to improve, and shiny medals and trophies reward that effort. But we all know there's more to this hobby than that. For us, this year, more than ever it has been about learning new skills, about bonding, about crossing the Atlantic into uncharted territory for LABBS - about singing at International, and #takingyouwithus. It has been about supporting each other when life tossed us about a bit. It has been about celebrating successes - like Sally McLean's name going on a sculpture in our hometown in honour of local women. It was about the little heart-warming moments, like watching our Gemma Thompson singing with LABBS Youth Chorus. It was about enjoying the utterly beautiful smile on Cath Morton's face when we gave her an Honorary Life Member pin at our Friends and Family Day - a smile as broad as her barbershop legacy. It was about the love we all felt on the risers when Gail Grainger announced us on stage for our contest package, with daughter Zoe smack in

our midst, husband Charles just off in the wings on backstage duty, and grand-daughter Olivia in the auditorium in support.



#wetokeyouwithus

It's always a thrill to become a medallist, but those other moments, the little hidden treasures we keep tucked away with us (like our chorus tokens), they matter too, so very much. We look forward to hunting down more treasures next year. See you in Harrogate, me hearties!

**Jean Lewis, PRO
White Rosettes**

Bournemouth Belles 35 Years Old!

The Belles were delighted to be back at Convention again this year. Every year is just as exciting as the last and leaves you already looking forward to the next.



Longest serving Belles: Carol Gilbert - 35 years, Sue Sandham - 32 years, Sylvia Parnell - 15 years, Suzanne Carey - 14 years, Irene Hewitt- 34 years

This year was particularly special as we have been together for 35 years in September 2024! We celebrated in style at our retreat in September but the cherry on top was achieving our highest score to date at Convention including our highest ever score for performance! Our fabulous Carol Gilbert, one of the founding members of the Belles, was again with us on stage at Convention with as much passion for the Belles, barbershop and convention as she had at the beginning! Alongside our long-established Belles who have been competing for over 30 years we were also delighted to have five new ladies join us on stage this year and introduce them to the joys of Convention.



Belles of Three Spires Retreat

We were so very proud of our MDs, and their quartet sisters in 'Tempest' who achieved 5th place in the quartet contest! They were absolutely fabulous, and we look forward to watching them for many more years.

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

Quartet Corner

Barberlicious LABBS 23 Championship Year End... Next stop Sweden for EBC25!

Congratulations to Muddy Stiletto's,

Women's Quartet Champions (QC), The Light Fantastic, and Amersham A Cappella who won Gold in their respective contests, as well as all the Medal and Award winners who crossed the stage at LABBS24 Convention in Bournemouth. We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped to ensure the success of Convention, your efforts did not go unnoticed. Special thanks go out to the amazing group of LABBS members who attended our 'Intro to Quartetting' fringe event and "had a go" at singing in Quartet with us, it was so much fun. We finished our Championship year with a fabulous trip to Killarney at

the beginning of October, where we were invited to mic cool both the National Quartet and International Chorus contests, where incidentally we competed with Crystal Chords, at the Irish Association of Barbershop Singers 2024 Convention. We later performed as guests in their Gala Show and were excited to sing a Sam Hubbard arrangement of *Sister Suffragette* in collaboration with Lady Barbalade at the end of our show set. <https://youtu.be/zuEgJW7K3aM?si=iE5K0wRIF1zONNYM> So, we have had a fantastic year of opportunities which we have embraced to the full, filled with lots of love and support from our friends, family, chorus and LABBS members. Thanks once again to everyone who

contributed to our fundraising efforts, we could not have had the year we had without your generosity. The highlight of our LABBS24 weekend was that we were delighted to receive our QC Crown pins and perform on stage with the QC Chorus. It has been a huge privilege being your LABBS ambassadors and we have loved every minute of our Championship year!

Next stop is Sweden where we have been nominated by LABBS to represent the association in the European Barbershop Convention in Helsingborg in May 2025, so hopefully we will see some of you there!

**Anna, Anne-Marie, Beck and Bushra
Barberlicious**



Sister Suffragette

A Year of Harmonies, Highlights, and High Seas with In House Quartet!

What a year it's been for us in *IN HOUSE QUARTET*! From belting out harmonies with our Cheshire Chord Company sisters to prepping for an incredible opportunity to represent LABBS in Sweden, we've been nonstop – and loving every second of it!

Even though we didn't get to take the stage as just the four of us at this year's LABBS Convention, we had the absolute joy of performing with our Cheshire Chord Company sisters. Singing with such a talented group is the best feeling ever. Together we created some incredible moments that we'll never forget. One of the big highlights? Our show-stopping performance of *Whitney Houston*! The energy, the harmonies, the sass! It's always going to be one of our favourites! Convention wouldn't be convention without some memorable costume changes, right? We had so much fun

switching up our looks throughout the weekend, but if we're honest, our favourite by far was our pirate costumes/ bird outfit! Now we're



seriously thinking about putting together a pirate-themed set—imagine us swashbuckling through some sea shanties with that classic barbershop flair. "Shiver me trebles",

Setting Sail for Sweden!

We're now busy prepping for our next big one: representing LABBS at the European Barbershop Convention in Sweden this May. We're thrilled to be crossing the International stage again and to show everyone what we're all about. We're working hard to make sure we're bringing our very best, and we can't wait to make LABBS proud!

So, keep your eyes on our social media—we'll be sharing our journey every step of the way. And remember, if you're planning an event and looking to add a touch of barbershop magic, *IN HOUSE QUARTET* is ready to perform for you, whether it's big or small. Here's to even more adventures, amazing music, and maybe just a few more pirate costumes!

**Jane, Julie, Rachel and Jo
In House**

Mic Warmer Number 2!

We were so excited to accept an invitation to sing as mic warmers at the LABBS Quartet Semi-Finals. What an opportunity! Then, the nerves kicked in.

What were we going to sing? What were we going to wear? Where were we going to stay? So many more questions!

Once we answered most of those we set to work on our songs and decided that our goal was clear: to "razzle dazzle" the judges, enjoy the experience and hopefully charm the small crowd that had gathered to watch our performance.

Everyone familiar with this scene knows that the journey isn't always smooth sailing. In the chaotic moments

before entering the stage our preparations were filled with unexpected challenges. Just before stepping out, we discovered a missing back from an earring, dealt with disappearing scarves and battled with wands that refused to cooperate. There was even a moment where one of the canes took an unexpected flight across the warmup room, eek!

Despite these hurdles, simply making it to the stage felt like a triumph. When the moment arrived, "fortune" smiled upon us. (See what we did there). The mishaps were few and with the lights shining down we embraced the moment, letting our nerves settle down and we focused on telling our stories.

During our short time on stage we felt we performed well - proving that sometimes achievements come from overcoming adversity, and just finding joy in singing together.

As we left the stage, we were proud of ourselves and looked forward to



watching the amazing quartets compete for the rest of the day.

Thank you to our friends, including those from Spinnaker and Cascade Chorus and to our family members that travelled to support us. We appreciated every single one of you being there and giving us valuable feedback.

Hope to see everyone at prelims next year!

**Jo, Liz W, Emma & Liz T
Fourtuned Cookies Quartet**



Spectacular Convention Fun for SpecsAppeal

LABBS convention 2024

has been the best convention of our lives. As we travelled to Bournemouth on Thursday, we had no idea of the splendid turns that this weekend was going to take.

Friday afternoon saw us take to the Convention stage for the first time as a quartet to debut our Jen Mills Award song. We have loved learning Liz Garnett's arrangement of The Jogging Song this year and working on a performance that we hoped would get a laugh or two. Any nerves disappeared as we heard the first laugh as we walked on, and we loved every second of our time on stage. In our Jen Mills application, we promised LABBS a good laugh in 2024 and so hearing the audience laugh was a great

relief and a glorious experience. Making people laugh is definitely our quartet happy place.



On Saturday we joined our chorus, Bristol Fashion, in the chorus competition and after a fabulous sing we were able to celebrate with them coming fourth. Being part of this chorus is a joy - the support and encouragement from team Bristol Fashion is amazing and is

certainly helping us improve and have more fun as a quartet. We love you all!

And then, quite frankly Saturday evening took an astonishing turn. After being renamed briefly and then name checked by Helen Lappert in Amersham's gold medal show spot, we saw them sing our favourite Spice Girls Madrigal and if that wasn't enough, sang it with them on the stairs in the afterglow. A completely magical moment.

LABBS Convention 2024 has been brilliant and the most amazing one for all of us. Thank you, LABBS - we love being a part of this organisation - we appreciate all the love and support we have had as a quartet and cannot wait till next year!

**Hannah, Amy, Becky and Kate
SpecsAppeal Quartet**

We're Almost There!

Oh my! What a wonderful weekend

we've had at LABBS Convention 2024! We only went and won a medal! To be placed as the LABBS 2024 quartet bronze medallists was, (and still is), beyond our wildest dreams! Yes - we certainly aspired to this, but for it to happen this year - well that was the cherry on the cake! We have continued to work hard and, more importantly, bond as a quartet and as friends. We have become so close over the last few years, knowing exactly how each other are feeling, what each of us are about to do, or when they quite

simply need their bra adjusting to get that new dress to hang right (ahem! #bassbarilove). These bronze medals mean so much to us. More than just a singing accolade. It is the reward for persistence and determination and the journey along a meandering pathway with a goal in mind. We've encountered illness, life challenges and family commitments, meaning that sometimes we've not been able to stick to our best laid plans, but our mantra of kindness



and family/health first has remained steadfast.

Of course, we couldn't have reached this level of achievement without some serious support and coaching along the way and we'd like to acknowledge those who have been such a big part of our journey to this point. First and foremost, our families for letting us out to sing "yet again!", our beloved chorus - Bristol Fashion - for their unerring support (and their rather biased opinions), our MD Craig Kehoe for giving his time so freely, Sally Mclean, Rob Mance, Rachael Murphy and Nicky Salt for their expert coaching. THANK YOU!

So - what's next? More! More! More! We have some fabulous new songs lined up and we can't wait for the journey to continue.

**Lisa, Elena, Debbie & Caroline
Sonic**



Charities supported by LABBS at Convention 2024 were RNLI and the Yorkshire Air Ambulance

A tombola with donated prizes raised £247 and RNLI merchandise sales and donations raised £323, which was a fantastic total for the RNLI of £570.



In addition, around 20 bags of bras were collected to raise money for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance



Ruth Graham - Front of House, David Richmond-Coggan - Chairman of the Christchurch & Bournemouth RNLI Branch, and John Griffith, local volunteer



This is to thank

The Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

who helped Christchurch and Bournemouth RNLI Fundraisers

to raise £570

through the tombola, retail sales and donations at their National Convention in Bournemouth

These funds will support the RNLI Lifeguards on the beautiful beaches of Bournemouth Bay, helping to keep them safe for residents and our summer visitors

Thank you!

Without supporters like you, our lifeguards could not continue their lifesaving work

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), a charity registered in England and Wales (209603), Scotland (SC037736), the Republic of Ireland (20003326), the Bailiwick of Jersey (14), the Isle of Man (1308 and 006329F), the Bailiwick of Guernsey and Alderney

RNLI.org



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