

Autumn 2020 £4

## Who's Excited For The LABBS Big Weekend?

30th October - 1st November 2020

See the full story, page 4

**BIG**  
**WEEK-END**



## This Is Your Life

See the full story, page 8

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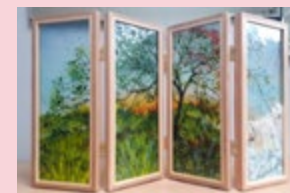
y: [singLABBS](https://www.youtube.com/singLABBS)

## What's inside

### Oh That Man! page 12



### TV Art page 10



### Lockdown Celebrations page 9



## Update from your Editor

**Welcome to** another packed edition of Voice Box. This issue really does prove that LABBS members are a creative bunch! If Zoom rehearsals aren't quite enough for you, take inspiration from the many choruses who have gone a step further and developed a range of really fun events.

Choruses have celebrated birthdays and anniversaries, looked back on days gone by, welcomed (very) special guests and held themed evenings. Overall, it has been about getting to know each other a bit better and having some fun. After all, it's the music that brings us together, but it's the friendships that make us stay.

**Enjoy.**

**Yvette**



**Hello everyone** and welcome to our second on-line edition of Voice Box.

During the last couple of months, it has been my pleasure to attend several chorus Zoom rehearsals and see first-hand the love and enthusiasm we have for our fantastic hobby. It is so good to know that despite the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in, Barbershop is alive and kicking and I know how much we are all yearning for the day that we can meet and sing together once again.

As a Board, we have started to facilitate meetings with the Chairs of our clubs (again, on Zoom) so that they can share ideas with each other and we can all discuss the challenges we are facing, and we have created a Facebook discussion group for them as a way to keep in touch. It is all going very well and something that we plan to continue.

In other news, the Board has begun a series of meetings to review LABBS' 5-year strategy which was last addressed in 2015. Initial discussion focused on our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, from which we identified a number of strategic opportunities to take forward.

We will keep you updated and hope to be in a position to start to share the outcomes of our further discussions at the next club Chairs' forum in October and more widely at LABBS' Council meeting in November

LABBSi and LABBS e online events continue to go from strength to strength and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in making these happen – the tech team, our educators and guests presenters – you are all amazing! There is a huge amount of planning involved in everything we deliver, and it is hugely appreciated. The signing video for 'Make Your Own Kind of Music' was brilliant and special thanks to Helen 'Flash' Watson for her time and effort in bringing us together in a quite different way.

In closing, I would like to remind you that our LABBS Big Weekend is fast approaching. This is a unique opportunity for each and every LABBS club and quartet to take part in what promises to be a fantastic event unlike any traditional LABBS Convention... Please take the chance to show us all what makes your chorus and quartet special and keep an eye on social media for updates.

Have a great summer with your families and please do take good care of yourselves.

**In harmony  
Nancy**

## Diary Dates

4-6 September 2020	LABBS Judging Seminar
19 September 2020	LABBS Board Meeting
Oct 30-Nov 1	THE LABBS BIG WEEKEND
Nov 15	LABBS Board meeting
Nov 21	LABBS Council meeting

**For more dates and info, see our website**  
[www.labbs.org.uk](http://www.labbs.org.uk)



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## Champs Corner

# A virtual kind of magic

**One good** thing that has come out of this strange virtual world we now live in is the ease with which we can now meet up with distant friends. In the real world, busy diaries had to be co-ordinated, appointments made, venues booked and travel arrangements set in place. Today, it's much easier to reconnect.

Earlier this month, we had a joint rehearsal with our friends in The Cottontown Chorus - along with special guests David and Sandi Wright and Nancy Philbin - without any of us having to travel further than our living rooms. 98 of us logged onto Zoom that night to reunite A Kind of Magic, our mixed chorus which won the gold medal at BABS last year.

The two MDs, Helen and Neil, interviewed David and Sandi who had logged on from the USA. It was reassuring to find that the problems that plague our virtual rehearsals - such as people dropping off Zoom for no reason, poor internet connections, frozen screens and difficulties 'muting' - are the same worldwide. However the overwhelming sentiment is that virtual rehearsing is better than not singing or seeing each other at all.

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"We began the rehearsal with a 'de-gunking' vocal warm-up."

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We started the rehearsal with a physical warm-up, courtesy of Flash. Then, in true Helen-style, we began the rehearsal with a 'de-gunking' vocal warm-up, accompanied by Casper, Helen's



greyhound who will be familiar to anyone who has logged into the recent virtual LABBSi sessions.

Boo from Amersham's music team taught us all a tag that had been arranged for mixed voices. We each recorded ourselves singing and Boo seamlessly pulled them together to create a memento of our lockdown music-making.

We ended the evening by singing through last year's competition package - 'Somebody to Love' and 'Footloose' (with full choreo). We also sang an emotional rendition of 'The Climb' and 'A Kind of Magic', before heading off to the virtual pub together.

Each of us left hoping that the next time we meet, it will be face-to-face. The sooner the better!

**Amanda Dawson**  
**PRO, Amersham A Cappella**

## Deadline for next issue

### Friday 27 November 2020

Please supply approx 350 words accompanied by photographs in the highest resolution possible, in colour, as separate jpeg files to [voiceboxeditor@labbs.org.uk](mailto:voiceboxeditor@labbs.org.uk). Photographs should be at least 1MB in size. Photographs taken on phones are usually fine, but please send direct from the photo gallery on the phone via email for maximum resolution.

# 30 October – 1 November 2020



**When coronavirus** prevented us from getting together in Bournemouth this year as planned, an idea started to form about what we might do instead. To do nothing was NOT an option! With encouragement and excitement as more people got to hear, the idea developed into a plan and the plan is now starting to take shape – and a pretty amazing shape it is too.

So here is the plan.

**We will deliver a LABBS Convention typical programme online – and any element we can't deliver online, we will replace with something better!**

## Five minutes on stage



For example, we can't hold a competition online so instead we are inviting EVERY LABBS club and EVERY LABBS registered quartet to take to the stage with a video of up to five minutes which tells us more about who they are, whether through a pre-lockdown performance they are proud of, a virtual production or maybe a series of photos they show us what's important to them – anything as long as it's five minutes or under and a video, preferably MP4 and definitely landscape.

The delivery team for this event is growing and activity is underway across all of the main streams: **Performance**, **Fringe**, **On Demand** & **LABBS TV**. Much of what will be included over the weekend will be driven by your input – so be sure to use one of the forms below to support the team.

## Awards



The LABBS Big Weekend will include presentation of the annual awards, so if you haven't already done so, get your nominations in for the Young Barbershopper of the Year and for the Quartet arrangement award.

September 30th - [Jen Mills Submissions](#)

September 30th - [Katy Phillips Young Barbershopper of the Year nominations](#)

September 18th\*\* - [Chorus & Quartet Contribution Reservation](#)

September 18th - [AFTERGLOW Reservation](#)

September 28th - [Long Service Awards](#)

September 28th - [Absent Friends](#)

\*\*October 3rd - [Final Chorus & Quartet Video Contributions](#)

October 3rd - [Inspirational Performances](#)

## Long Service Awards

Also, do be sure to present awards to your Long Service members – creativity will be required but we must celebrate these lovely people.

In addition to your usual contributions and the “Five minutes on the stage” videos already mentioned, do think about the additional contributions we want from you:

## Absent Friends

We want to take the time during our celebrations to remember those we have lost since we were all together in Llandudno last year. If you would like to pay tribute to someone important to you, send us a picture with a caption and we will do what we can to have them remembered at this special time.

## Absent Friends Tribute

## Inspirational Performances

We want to hear about performances that have inspired you – whether quartet or chorus, international or domestic, virtual or real life. These suggestions will be gathered together as playlists for **On Demand** viewing during LBW and a selection in each category will form part of features which will be part of **LABBS TV**.

## Inspirational Performances

## Afterglow

Convention would not be Convention without AFTERGLOW! This is certainly a challenge online but think of the delights of sharing a glass and a song with dear friends whilst in your PJs and comfy slippers – maybe some of you do that anyway, so maybe more of us can join in!

There are many ways we can achieve this, but the approach we take will depend on which clubs or groups offer to run a session. It could be a quiz, some games or a good sing-a-long to end the day - the choice will be yours. We will help set up some of the tech and provide signposts for your prospective audience so you can just, well, Glow!

So secure your afterglow slot while you can - [AFTERGLOW Reservation](#).

There is so much to share and progress every week – this will be shared on LABBS Social Media channels and in weekly updates sent to your club contact.

We look forward to seeing you at the LABBS Big Weekend 30 October – 1 November 2020.

**Rita Hulands**

**LABBS Marketing & Communications Director**





## Celebrating lockdown style with Crystal Chords



July was a celebratory month as Crystal Chords is 40 this year, and a number of our members also had a birthday with a '0' at the end of it. In total we had nine members who hit a combined age of 410 years old. We aren't going to spill the beans on who is in which decade though - that would be rude! We did bring the birthday girls together for a toast and a night

of fun though and we were joined by the ever-lovely Teresa Phillips, our LABBS Liaison Officer.

Teresa isn't the only guest we've had join us on our screens and we were lucky enough to have Sam Hubbard share his magic with us recently. Sam arranged a new ballad for us that we were just about to get into before we hit lockdown. We've still been working on it independently and in some section time virtually, so it was great to have Sam come in and talk to us about the arrangement.

So we may be missing the harmonies, but the weekly catch ups are keeping our emotional banks topped up with friendship and fun.

**Alison Liddell**  
PRO, Crystal Chords

**"We'll meet** again... don't know where.... don't know when...." If only we did know when we could meet again together as a chorus! The hugs and the harmonies have all been stolen from us over this pandemic time, but at least we can still have the happiness of being together.

Life on Zoom carries us forward and we have started to introduce a monthly social evening which is already proving to be great fun. Our event in June was a 'sequin spectacular' and featured all the chorus in a (at least one) sequin. We had beautiful solo ballads, video clips of trips through the archives and a hilarious Victoria Wood tribute from the one and only Pzazz tenor, Sarah Hicks. It was a fabulous, sparkling evening and a welcome break for many from the lockdown blues.

## Happy 90th Birthday Irene!



**Mersey Harmony** wished our lovely Irene Riding a very Happy 90th Birthday on 6th June 2020!

Irene has been a long-standing member since 1982. She always gives us her support and love. Currently she joins us during our Monday evening Zoom rehearsals.

To celebrate her birthday, we individually recorded ourselves singing Happy Birthday and sent the recordings to Marianne, our clever Assistant MD, who then put it all together.

So, on her birthday, we were able to sing 'Happy Birthday' to Irene in four-part

Harmony! She was overwhelmed! We also sent her images of ourselves as we had a virtual party for her.

We were delighted to welcome Nancy Philbin, Chair of LABBS, to our Zoom rehearsal on Monday 8th June so she could celebrate with Irene.

Many happy returns, Irene, and many thanks from us all for your years of dedication to Mersey Harmony!

**Colette MacFarlane**  
PRO, Mersey Harmony

# Missing the hugs at Second City Sound

**We hope** you are all keeping safe but still enjoying our marvellous hobby. We are missing our PR officer Michelle Mills-Porter, who has moved on to another exciting position, so I am deputising, with loads of help from our membership secretary, Elaine Mobsby.

During lockdown our MD, Rob Barber ('The Boss' for short!) has arranged help from his fellow MDs around the country to provide us with interesting and informative warm up sessions. We would like to thank Jo Braham from Cheshire Chord Company, Craig Kehoe from Bristol Fashion, Hannah Briggs from Steel City Voices, Zac and Claire Booles from Ignite UK and Sally McLean from ... wait, I've forgotten ... oh yes, The White Rosettes.

We learnt about forward placement, how to relax our jaws, massage our tongues and smile more with our eyes (even behind our glasses!).

Lockdown has done different things to different people: diminished our confidence, made us gain weight (oh wait, that was because we ate too much...), made us appreciate how much we enjoy hugging our friends, but also how much singing in harmony means to us all. We appreciate all that LABBS, our musical directors and our chairs are doing in the background to ensure that we can meet together again safely as soon as possible, but for now, keep safe and keep singing.

**Sandra Moss**  
Secretary, Second City Sound

PS If anyone knows a barbershop singer in the West Midlands area who would like to join us, especially if they would like the job of PRO, please get in touch at moss\_sandra@hotmail.com.

# Hari and Harmony



## The chorus

was apprehensive, we were saying goodbye to our MD Peter who had been with us for over seven years developing our sound and style and taking us to a giddy 63.9% in Bournemouth 2018. How were we going to find a new director who could build on this? Would we like them, would they like us? We needn't have worried, she found us!

Hari Birtles took over in November 2019

straight after Llandudno and in our first music festival together we gained Outstanding in both categories – "feeling and sensitivity were never in doubt", "full and energised tone"! We started making wonderful plans – a singout in Oxford for Christmas, new songs, exciting coaching, we would move to a brand new hall with a car park big enough for everyone and space to store the risers, we were having a retreat weekend in Swindon. We were heading for Bournemouth in 2020 with new outfits and everything... and then of course it all had to stop.

After four short months of learning our names and faces, who was in which section, building the stack and who made the best cuppa at tea break, Hari had to rewrite the rehearsal rule book and guide us all through how to Zoom. Again we were apprehensive, how could we keep singing together if we couldn't get together?



"How could we keep singing?"

Yes, it was the same for all the singers for all over the country, but we have done so much during lockdown that we wouldn't have been able to do together. As well as new physical and vocal warm-ups, we have been educated and inspired by some amazing coaches from home and abroad, we have been learning music theory and sharing the songs that have inspired us through the years (there were tears!) and the cakes and bakes getting us through 2020.

It has been a tough first year together, but we are stronger for it and can't wait for that first song in our new home....

**Meriel Lewis**  
PRO, Harmony Inspires



## Party Time for Ruby Red Rosettes

**What to** do when your 40th birthday falls slap-bang in the middle of a pandemic? Why, party of course! COVID-19 was never going to stop the Red Rosettes from having a ball (virtually) when they reached their Ruby Anniversary on July 15.

It took lots of planning, careful programming and some super tech skills, but that shindig will live long in the memory! Guests of honour included LABBS chair Nancy Philbin, LABBS Liaison Officer Sue Ward, and founder members Jean Gould, Susan Corcoran and Linda Corcoran (who was also MD of the Red Rosettes at one time). Everyone who attended was treated to a fabulous night of fun, friendship and nostalgia.

There was a 'This is Your Life', with some of our more mature ladies – including founder member Dorothy Klemm, still a member of the chorus – interviewed by the inimitable Sir Leon Baloney. We had an emotional look back at the chorus over the years, a cracking chorus, a quartet, a duet and solo performances, poetry,



comedy – and even a virtual afterglow! Everyone was dressed in their sparkliest attire and much fizz was consumed. There was a surprise for Bass Section Leader, Pam Ambrose – who was made an honorary member in recognition of her 39 years of service on the committee, music team, riser putter upper and downer and countless other roles.



For those who couldn't attend, take a look at our YouTube channel for videos <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdMX4adcm0XRYIcJhdgOBaA>

**Sandra Mangan**  
Red Rosettes PR Team



## Stars of the Week at Red Rosettes



**Refusing to** let lockdown stop us, little groups of Red Rosettes started getting together online, doing anything from learning new repertoire songs together, learning old polecats we'd never sang before, rehashing current repertoire songs with new lockdown lyrics, and choosing new songs to have a bash at.

With 'star of the week' added to the Wednesday rehearsal schedule, places quickly filled up with wonderful solos from Kim (setting the bar VERY high), Emily and Sandra H, and then groups of fours, a five, and one group of numerous women, three men and a falcon.

Often, what started as a chance to just learn a new song with friends, developed into one person dressing up for fun (usually Kate!) and someone else copying (usually Leanne!) and then the entire group agreeing that costumes are absolutely essential. Seeing the video

submissions come in for The Game of Tones-themed video certainly provided more than a few belly laughs.

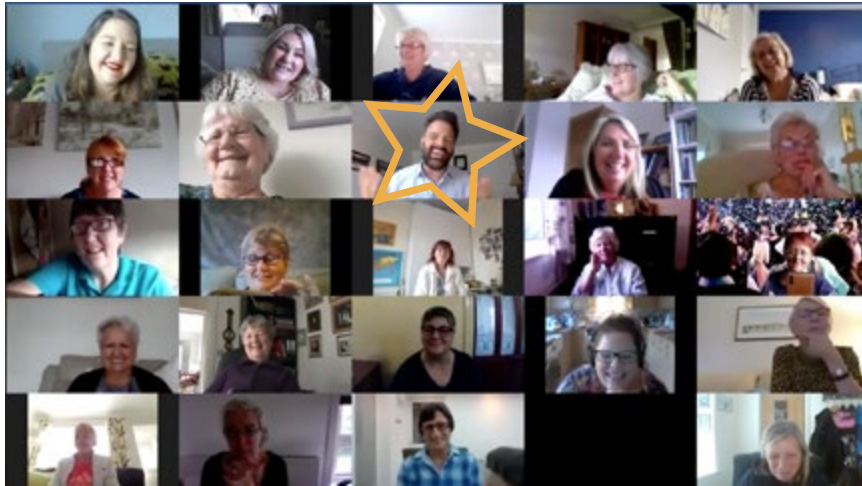
Being able to do this had various benefits such as providing a focused target in lockdown, keeping our spirits up through continuing to sing, some members of the chorus developing tech skills they never had before the pandemic, and being able to listen and feedback on each others' audio recordings.

Nearly all of the virtual groups' efforts are on our YouTube page, with further performances in the pipeline as we try and get our performance fix until singing restrictions are lifted.

**Leanne Blaney**  
The Red Rosettes



## A Devine Surprise for Birthday Girl Jo



**Jo Wiseman's** Big Birthday was approaching and she was expecting it to be a low-key affair. After all, 80 is nothing to shout about, is it? But the Red Rosettes weren't about to let the day go unmarked, and as secretive groups began to meet all over Facebook, a plan was hatched... After all, lovely lead Jo deserved a bit of fuss.

Any chorus who holds rehearsals over Zoom knows the ear-bleeding joy of singing 'together', so although we pretended to sing a special Happy Birthday to Jo, it was followed with a specially-made version of the song, recorded by members in living rooms and bedrooms across Lancashire and put together by Stacy Bridge and Leanne Blaney.

Our tech-savvy duo also worked their magic on a recording of 'I Will Survive', again recorded by solo members in honour of the birthday girl. Usually she takes the

solo at the start of the song, but this time our MD Emma McManus did the honours (and Jo is to record her own contribution to be added into the mix).

Oh, and at one point we all turned off our cameras, and then returned in full swimming gear – long story but Jo absolutely loved it!

But the highlight of what was a pretty amazing rehearsal night? The arrival of Sean Devine of OC Times, who serenaded Jo with a special version of 18 Candles (80 Candles, of course!). His visit had been a closely kept secret and was a lovely gift to all of the Red Rosettes too!

**Sandra Mangan**  
Red Rosettes PR Team

## A Heart-Warming Lockdown Moment with the Belles

**In May**, the proud Belles of Three Spires dressed for VE day at our Zoom rehearsal - we Belles do love a good theme! There were many lovely outfits and hats, on a red, white and blue theme. As we remembered previous generations' liberation, this had a poignant feeling to us now in lockdown.

We sang "We'll meet again" by Vera Lynn, and, looking forward to when we can be properly together, many of us suddenly got some dust in our eyes...

**Eileen Askew**  
PRO, The Belles of Three Spires



**Amanda Carter, The Belles of Three Spires**

# A Trophy for Signature...Just in Time!

**Just before** the lockdown stamped a big 'CANCELLED' on all our diary dates for festivals and sing-outs in 2020, we entered the Woodley Festival of Arts and Music at Woodley in Berkshire.

On the 7th March, we competed in three classes in the festival, gaining an 'Outstanding' from the judges. We were also delighted to receive the Cantilena Trophy for 'Best performance in the Choir and Vocal Group Classes' in the 50th anniversary year of this well-established annual festival.



We didn't realise at the time that this would be the last public performance for a long while - so it makes winning the trophy even more poignant.

We still 'meet' and sing every Thursday courtesy of Zoom and find this a highlight of the week. But we all eagerly await that day when we can actually meet in person and sing, so... Let's Get Together Again!

**Joanna Birtles**  
PRO, Signature A Cappella

## Club Updates

# Home Is Where The Art Is

*This year I celebrate my 10th year anniversary as a member of the sixty strong, four part a cappella chorus, Cheshire Chord Company. I've made friends for life and had wonderful adventures. Being part of this supportive group is truly rewarding. I would love something for the home that marks this amazing journey.*

**This was** a brief I sent to Home is Where the Art is a few months ago, to see if I would be selected as a buyer to take part in the BBC One show which sees Nick Knowles challenge artists to create a beautiful artwork for people they've never met.

Excitingly I was chosen to be one of the buyers and at the end of filming, with the help of my chorus friend Lynn Day, I had to choose between two pieces of art, a collage landscape and a piece of decorative glass work. I chose the work of Kate Webley, a sculptor and glass fusion artist, who works and lives on two canal boats and uses the natural landscapes along the tow paths as her inspiration.

The piece is in four panels representing the four seasons and the four parts of our harmony. A large tree goes across all the panels and represents the whole chorus.



**Lynn, Alison, Nick, Kate, Giles**

There are 60 sprigs of grass, signifying each member of the chorus. In the spring panel is silver to reflect the

silver in our logo, with pink and turquoise sprinkled in the other panels representing colours from our costumes.

Kate has designed the panel to sit on my lounge windowsill which is south facing and gets all the sun. The piece reflects light around the room as the sun changes direction.

At the end of the process I decided that I couldn't leave the second piece of artwork behind and ended by buying both.

This second piece, by Giles Davies, is a collage picture of Chesil Beach, called Four Part Harmony. Within the picture are images of CCC taken from Voice Box which help to make it extremely special.



The programme was aired on 24th July 2020 and can be viewed [here](#), on BBC iPlayer and YouTube.

**Alison Linfield**  
Cheshire Chord Company



Look out for your favourite magazine, Voice Box, as it is cut up and used in the collage!



# Saturday Night Almost Live with Cheshire Chord Company

**It's hard** to believe we're over halfway through the year and sadly we've not been able to sing together since March. At Cheshire Chord Company, we've not let this dampen our spirits, and with the recent loosening of lockdown, some friends have now managed to have a socially distanced catch-up.

Our rehearsals have still been ongoing, weekly, and our fabulous music team has organised some amazing nights of singing, education, special guests and a virtual evening of entertainment!

In the middle of June we should have been meeting for our retreat weekend. As this was not possible, we decided to have a Zoom evening instead - Saturday Night Almost Live! The evening consisted of singing from quartets, piano solos, TikToks, poems, barbershop interviews and a quiz room! We even had a special CCC Cocktail - CCC Citrus Crush! The night ended in true barbershop style with an afterglow at the Zoom bar, the best thing being that you didn't have to leave the comfort of your living room! It was a fantastic night and one that couldn't have been put together without such an impressive team!

Over the last couple of months, we've had some special guests drop into our Zoom rehearsals and most recently held two special education evenings. The first was with Craig Kehoe from Bristol Fashion. Craig talked to us about the singing category in our features and spotlight week. Our second education evening was a joint one with the wonderful Zac Booles and his Sweet Adelines



chorus, Ignite. We shared some singing, education and even managed some smaller break out rooms for some social time.

We look forward to seeing everyone again soon. In the meantime, you can catch up with what we've been up to on our website <http://www.cheshirechord.co.uk/> or social media pages.

**Julie Phillips**  
PRO, Cheshire Chord Company

# Classic Convention Badges

**Does anyone** out there collect badges? My little 92 year-old friend, Mary, passed away last year and she was a barbershopper for many years, always attending convention with Alice Marston (there must be some of you who remember Alice).

Mary's daughter-in-law recently brought me a little box and in it were 11 classic convention badges.

They date from 1983 through to 1990 then 1992, 1993 and 1999.

As I have these dates in my collection, it would be good to know that they will go to a good home, so if you are interested, I will happily post any or all to you if you email me at [anne@withnall.uk](mailto:anne@withnall.uk).

Hope all is well with you and I wouldn't mind betting that you are all missing the collection of this year's raffle books and money!

Let's hope we will all be back on track for next year.

**Anne Withnall**  
LABBS Raffle Organiser



# Ooh That Man!

**After finishing** our successful video of 'Anthem', we were all raring to go on another lockdown project. 'Anthem' is an emotional ballad, so we felt a change of tempo and sentiment was needed and what better than the song we were learning, 'That Man', arranged by our very own MD Pete Nugent.



For 'Anthem' we had combined both audio and video recording in one go but had found it so stressful trying to get the notes and words right and performing to the camera at the same time. So this time we recorded the audio separate from the video, a much easier task for everyone.

As lockdown was starting to ease it was the perfect opportunity for some of us to gather in small socially distanced groups in gardens. The brief was to think of something to do while the filming was taking place, and I was amazed by the number of different activities that the chorus came up with, from gardening to cleaning windows.

The hardest part for me was on the hottest day of June when temperatures reached the mid 30s and I was filming for over six hours but everyone stepped up to the mark and gave it everything.

Then the hard work began! Pete arranged the audio and I added the video. Anyone who has edited video will appreciate the time it takes to produce just a few seconds of finished clip.

I had filmed Pete - 'That Man' - early on, on a day which promised to be a bit cool but after a shower the temperature soared leaving Pete having to carry on playing his part in his thick jacket "for continuity"!

In the edit I chose to turn him into a cartoon character, to give humour to the piece, and everyone's reactions to the ending with his "phone call" was a fitting finale to the song.



The whole process has taken two months from start to finish, but I believe that the time spent was worth the effort, and hope that everyone who watches it will smile. Click here and enjoy!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=jRrCqxuxuLA&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=jRrCqxuxuLA&feature=emb_logo)

**Kathy Farrell**  
Videographer, Wardrobe Mistress and Videographer  
Black Sheep Harmony



Talking to Debbie about the idea, she said, "Much of the focus of my study was around the meaning and context of music. Studying why music makes us feel the way it does and how music brings communities together. Off the back of this, I wanted to offer a way for singers to delve deeper into the meaning of a song and bring it to life from the sheet music and teach tracks. I mulled over an idea I called Song Club, where groups could get together to listen to and discuss how different singers approach the music and lyrics of a particular song to give it unique expression and characterisation. And also look at why and how the music was written, and the critical response to performances. When I suggested Song Club to Craig and the MPT at Bristol Fashion, they were really keen for me to trial the idea."

Three movie posters for 'The Phantom of the Opera' are displayed. The top left poster features a white mask with a red rose and the title 'THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA'. The top right poster shows the Phantom and Christine with the title 'Love Never Dies'. The bottom center poster shows a silhouette of a head filled with colorful confetti.

We also examined what the chorus means to us, and Lamorna Hooker developed, with the help of Rob Mance, this wonderful word cloud. We hope this shares our feelings and thoughts about barbershop, music and Bristol Fashion.

**Janis Smith**  
**PRO, Bristol Fashion**



# Chorus Iceni

Chorus Icení has had some fun on its our Zoom sessions during lockdown!

Still having almost 100% attendance every week!  
Still singing and learning new songs too!





# Amazing Grace - 35 Years in LABBS

**As one** of Junction 14's longest serving members, Grace Morrison recently received her 35 year pin. Here, she takes a look back over her long and varied barbershop journey.

My introduction to barbershop was in the late 1970s when I attended a Christmas Carol concert by the Northwood Sweet Adelines. I was immediately hooked.

We won the gold for our region and in 1984 after much fund-raising, 23 of us flew to Las Vegas for the International Convention, and we had a ball. On returning to England it was decided that we would leave Sweet Adelines and join LABBS which we did in 1985 as Capital Connection.

We competed every year from 1987 and won gold in 1989, travelling to Holland as guests, singing at BABS Convention in 1990, and at the Barbican in July 1990 with Hallmark of Harmony, Great Western Chorus and The Swingle Singers.

In 1991 I joined Chiltern Harmony to reduce my travelling distance, and again achieved success when we won a silver medal in 1992 and gold in 1994.

A moment that stays in my mind was in 1996 when we took part in the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year in Buxton. We successfully competed against 17 other male and female choirs and we won the 'single voice' class. It was a fabulous weekend which was filmed by the BBC and shown in 1997. The snow that year came down so thick that we thought we were going to be stranded there.

In November the same year, Chiltern Harmony put on a show at the Wycombe Swan with Thames Valley Chorus with Pam Ayres as our special guest. She wrote a song especially for us called, 'I wish I'd worn a bra'. It was a super night and marked the end of my time with Chiltern Harmony.



*J14, Bournemouth, 2011, Front row, far right*

However, I left Chiltern Harmony in good hands as there was an impressive new girl. I had sung in quartet with her for one of her audition pieces, and it was the beginning of something special for Helen Lappert who later took over as MD, changed the name to Amersham A Cappella and the chorus has never looked back.

With my other choruses I always sang baritone - but when I came to J14 I was told that they had their full quota of baris but they would be very happy to have me as a bass so I learnt all the Christmas carols and repertoire in bass which I sang until a bari left and I then re-learnt everything in bari.

I have been treasurer, helped with choreo, been a council rep, and membership secretary.

I am fairly certain that I have attended every convention since joining J14, even the years when J14 did not compete. I was proud to be with Junction 14 when we won the Millennium Trophy twice at convention - once in 2010 and then again in 2018.

I have now been with Junction 14 for 21 years and life in general is much more relaxed!

It seems strange that I have been singing for over 35 years, but I have enjoyed every moment.



*Grace with chair Gill Holmes (left) and membership secretary Clare Pritchard (right).*



*J14, Harrogate 2014, Outside left 2nd row in dark blue*



*Capital Connection, Las Vegas, 1984, 2nd row, 2 in from left*

**Grace Morrison  
Junction 14**



# Chordettes do Sleepwalk Their Way



**The global** pandemic didn't stop The Chordettes from completing this year's Sleepwalk for Rowcroft Hospice.

Instead of the planned event, which would have seen thousands of walkers completing the 5 or 10 mile walk around the beautiful South Devon coastline, participants were encouraged to undertake the 'Sleepwalk Your Way' completing the miles on a route and at a time of their choosing. It was a fantastic opportunity for our 'Singing Sisters' walkers to meet up for some socially distanced walks, and the obligatory coffee and cake at the end. We rambled through some glorious countryside and coastal routes, raising £1,350 for our local hospice in the process!



**Amy Hedger**  
**PRO, The Chordettes**

## Cancer Bra Bank

**Recently, Ellie** Dickens, a dear friend of mine received the happy news that she is in remission from breast cancer. As with all ladies suffering this horrible disease (not forgetting the men that get it too), Ellie has had a couple of difficult years undergoing awful treatment and major surgery. She now feels huge relief that it has produced such a positive result and praises the wonderful team that cared for her. She is enjoying, finally, being on the road to recovery.

As a result of her experiences Ellie has become involved in the breast reconstruction cancer team at Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital to create a Bra Bank for women undergoing major surgery. She said: "having a correctly fitting bra is such a key part of recuperation".

Unhappily, due to the law of averages, I feel sure there are ladies within LABBS and their friends who have gone through or are going through breast cancer treatment, and so ask for your help to boost the important Bra Bank.

If you able to, please donate any post-op bras which are in good condition, have good support and are no longer needed. The items should be sent to: Ellie Dickens, 97 High Street, Hungerford, Berkshire, RG17 0NB. And do include your name and address so that she can acknowledge the safe receipt of your kind donation.

Thank you

**Geraldine Davies-Carr**  
**9-5**



# All About Nancy

**The smiling face of LABBS, we thought it was about time we found out more about our chair, Nancy Philbin**

## When did you start singing?

I have sung for as long as I can remember - in the car with my Dad, at church and in school and work choirs.

## A brief barbershop singing history?

I joined Crystal Chords in January 2007 as I wanted to try something different. I was immediately hooked on barbershop and have never looked back...it's the best hobby in the world!

## What's your fondest childhood memory?

Beach holidays at Montrose and St Cyrus on the east coast of Scotland with my Mum, Dad and sister - and Johnshaven close by, a perfect fishing village.

## What do you listen to in the car?

At the moment, it's Michael Bublé and the soundtrack to Jersey Boys.

## What book are you reading?

The Thorn Birds by Colleen McCullough.

## What's your favourite warm up?

Alfred the Alligator.

## What's your best barbershop memory?

There are many but the best one was when Crystal Chords achieved third place at Harrogate in 2011, singing 'On the Street Where You Live' and 'Gershwin Medley' - we were all so giddy and very loud!

## Tell us a little about your family.

My Mum and Dad were married in 1960 in Airdrie, not far from Glasgow, which is where I was born. I have one sister, Moira, and our family moved to Stockport in 1974 when my Dad transferred with work. I still live in Stockport with my husband Paul (whom I met in the local pub!) and we have been married for almost 36 years. We have two grown-up sons, Andrew and David and two beautiful grand-daughters Alice and Lily.



## What is your profession?

I have worked for HMRC for 40 years! In my teenage years I had a paper-round and a Saturday job in a toy shop.

## Where is your favourite place to sing?

In the car! And at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester - I last sang there with Crystal Chords at the beginning of March to celebrate our 40th Anniversary. It was a very special evening as we were on the verge of lockdown and was almost the last time we sang together.

## How would you describe LABBS?

LABBS gives all of us an escape from real life with friendship and harmony at the heart of everything we do. I can't imagine my life without LABBS in it.



*Nancy with Donna McKay, President of Harmony Inc in Sandusky, Ohio 2019*



# Who's in the House with In House?



**With the** whole country still on lockdown, In House quartet was sad to miss this year's prelims. We loved our first event last year so to miss it this year, along with convention, is disappointing. Thankfully we've got some exciting songs to work on during this time!

Back in June we had two big Zoom/virtual evenings, the first with our lovely chorus Cheshire Chord Company. The night shared some of our chorus members' special talents including TikTok videos, poems, piano solos and much more! We sent in a video of a special edition of 'Who's in the House with In House?', featuring an exciting interview with the fabulous Sean Divine and Rob Mance! We then went on to show our version of Annie Lennox's 'Sweet Dreams'. You can still view it on our YouTube channel. Watch out for the special guest!

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"TikTok videos, poems, piano solos and much more."

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Later on, in June, in what would have been the prelims weekend, we got together with a number of other quartets across the country for an afternoon hosted by our 2019 champs, Sound Central. The afternoon consisted of some special guest speakers and performances from quartets. We'd like to thank everyone that was involved with the organisation of this event! Hopefully next year it'll be in person!

A couple of weeks ago, after four months of not seeing each other, we were able to meet in REAL LIFE! We had a lovely catch-up in Jo's long garden, with food, warm clothes and even a medal!

We look forward to seeing everyone soon. Don't forget you can find out more from us by visiting our website: <https://inhousequartet.wixsite.com/inhouse>.

**Julie Phillips**  
PRO, In House Quartet

# The Collective - Friendship and Song

**Virtual choirs** have brought friendship and music to singers across the world. Sandra Mangan from the Red Rosettes penned a poem to explain what *The Collective* means to her.

It was in the early days of lockdown that I saw a Facebook post about a new virtual choir being set up by Simon Lubkowski of The Locksmiths fame. I abandoned my inputting of British rainfall on the 1930s and decided to explore further. Little did I realise I was about to make a life-changing decision.

The Collective sounded like fun and I signed up eagerly, awaiting news of how to get involved with the first song, The White Cliffs of Dover. I expected a teach track and some interchange on social media – little did I realise how far reaching this movement would become. From those stuttering first steps, The Collective membership has grown and grown, with singers from all over the world taking part.

Everyone involved gets the chance to join in a wide range of coaching sessions with some really impressive teachers, we are provided with teach tracks, videos with Big Si conducting each part, education sessions, and above all, the support and friendship of a group that prides itself in leaving no one behind.

I'm proud to say that several of the Red Rosettes are there with me and we are all loving the Collective experience. I've caught up with old friends from LABBS and met lots of new ones too. The Collective really is a place that keeps on giving!

**Sandra Mangan**  
The Collective



## The Collective Will

If you've heard of The Collective and you're a sci-fi lover  
You'll think immediately of The Borg, because there is no other.  
But let me tell you that you're wrong, 'cos this Collective Rocks!  
We've even got some merchandise – that's T-shirts, hoodies, socks.

(Well that last one may be a lie because I had to rhyme,  
But if we ask our Rachel, she would have them there in time).  
So let me tell you about this group. They're friendly, loyal, kind  
We sing together, work so hard and no one's left behind.

And Simon is our leader. He's really quite a star  
We don't think he gets any sleep but this man will go far.  
We've got a mega music team – this lot is heaven-sent  
They've got jobs too they have to do – they need to pay the rent  
But noon or midnight, rain or shine, they never let us fall  
And who knew that a straw could be so useful, after all?  
So altos, tenors, soprs and bass – whatever part you sing  
We all go to the sessions and we make those voices ring  
It's three cheers to this loyal band from countries far and near  
We've made good friends – we ARE good friends.

Now, who's got Simon's beer?





# Crafty Belles

**At the** Belles of Three Spires we discovered early on in lockdown that our gardens are important to us, especially for Belles in isolation. This led to the group Belles in Bloom and, to arrange those lovely blooms, Belles FA (Floral Art). We were helped by Jayne Edmonds, our very own Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medallist and recent first prize winner in a Virtual World Flower Show.

Jayne offers tutorials on our Crafty Chorus group, alternating weekly with Holly Dawes who teaches watercolour on a floral theme. In June, Holly gave an interview with BBC Sounds with Sandra Godley about how we are keeping in touch and trying to sing during lockdown. We also enjoyed a tutorial on glass painting by Angela Sanchez-Rosemurgey. What a crafty bunch we are!

Belles Bakers have cook-alongs hosted by Alison Davies for tasty treats such as tiffin, and almond and cherry slices. This may have led to the need for the SAFFY (Stay Away From the Fridge, You) group where Val Simmons gives encouragement to those who want to shift those stubborn lockdown pounds: "We are a step ahead of the government's initiative to lose weight and get fit," says Val, in her latest summary email for those who are unable to attend for work (and other) commitments.

April Stevens leads the Belles' social meetings where we discuss, amongst other things, interesting family histories. Once a month we have an online social with wonderful talent displays, humorous stories and the delights of "Who Knew?" (guess the fact about a Belle) and "The Big Red Chair" (will they be allowed to walk away or be tipped out?) for the more embarrassing tales, often from our younger days.

Every Saturday night is quiz night and is a great hour of fun and competition, with nibbles and optional beverages. There has even been a Music Theory group which has already conquered Grade 1 and is now on to Grade 2.

All these activities help to keep us connected, until the time when we can sing together again.

**Eileen Askew**  
**PRO, The Belles of Three Spires**





# Crystals in a major key...worker

**Every chorus** will have their heroes of the hour, those people who are key workers during the pandemic and have been keeping the wheels turning in hospitals, essential stores, schools and all other manner of things over this time. Crystal Chords are no different and we wanted to take a little minute to celebrate our key worker super stars.

We've got several frontline health workers amongst us. Tenor Jenny is a perfusionist running heart, lung and life support systems in Stoke-on-Trent. COVID-19 has meant long hours in PPE and now a backlog to catch up on heart surgeries so working practices have been hit hard but the camaraderie has been fantastic.

GP Bushra has seen a huge switch as they've moved to video consultations and PPE for any face to face meetings in the surgery. Now talking to people who have put off seeing their GP it could be a new way for consulting for the long term. Beck, a colorectal surgeon has also adopted PPE to enable work to continue – bowel cancer is the third most common cancer for men and women in the UK and she has been supporting people who receive a diagnosis during the pandemic.

Centrally in the health system we also have Alison at NICE whose team has been publishing the COVID clinical guidelines for use across England. Then there's also been our health educationalists and Carole our Chairman is a midwife lecturer who chose to delay her retirement in order to be able to support her colleagues. Anne-Marie as a nursing lecturer was getting new nurses into the frontline whilst supporting them and ensuring patient safety and then Design & Technology and Art teacher Violet had to adapt to online teaching and the redesign of a full school curriculum to continue to support pupils.

We also can't forget our other key workers in stores, charities and areas like the waste industry. Tania is President of a cardboard recycling company and has had to continue to support packaging production for essential products.

Here at Crystal Chords we are proud and celebrate all of them.

**Alison Liddell**  
PRO, Crystal Chords

Anne-Marie Borneuf



Rebecca Fish



Rebecca Fish



Alison Liddell



Jenny Birtwistle



## Mersey Harmony Making Music

**Every year** on 21st June, the longest day, music lovers across the globe celebrate International Make Music Day. It's the largest grassroots music festival in the world! This year the song of the day was 'Bring me Sunshine'.

Each year, Mersey Harmony endeavours to take part. A few years ago we sang this favourite song in a pub in Wavertree, and followed this by hosting a music event at the bombed out church in Berry Street. We were joined by nine other performers, including drummers, children's drama, a signing choir, a duo plus a few more. This year we planned to do the same but lockdown made it impossible.

Not to be deterred, we hosted our regular rehearsal night over Zoom on Sunday instead of the usual Monday. We wore orange and we sang 'Bring me Sunshine'. We added to this and sang 'You are my Sunshine' to keep sunshine to the fore.

And to keep with the theme of the day we sang 'make your own kind of music'. It was an extremely enjoyable occasion.

**Angela Stevenson**  
Chair, Mersey Harmony



## Important Fundraising Continues for Spinnaker

**During lockdown**, disappointed to have had to cancel shows and fundraising events, Spinnaker Chorus was proud to have been able to continue to support our local charities.

We change our chosen charity with each financial year and have just come to the end of our fundraising year supporting Children with Cancer UK (CWCUK). Our procedure for choosing a charity involves our members suggesting nominations which are put into a hat. Our fundraising team then draws four nominations randomly. These four charities are then researched, and members are briefed on each and asked to vote for their preferred choice. The charity with the most votes becomes the one we will fundraise for, for the next financial year.

*"Now more than ever charities need our fundraising efforts."*

Despite having events cancelled, Spinnaker was able to present CWCUK with a healthy donation of £604.56. This reflects a percentage of our total fundraising activity achieved and was raised from raffles, bingo nights, Bonus Ball lottery, CD sales, singing events, Christmas bookings, public donation collections and a performance on the Isle of Wight ferry.

CWCUK was nominated initially by lead Spinnakerette Diana Carver who said: "Cancer is a scary thing for adults, let alone children, and my reason for choosing the charity is so that hopefully the donation will go towards making the children feel less anxious and frightened".

We have now completed voting for our 2020/21 Spinnaker charity and chosen Off the Record, a wonderful organisation which provides support and counselling to promote the emotional wellbeing of young people in south east Hampshire.

Now more than ever charities desperately need our fundraising efforts to boost their income to

enable them to continue providing the great services they do, often without government financial support. Many self-funded charities are really struggling and are in danger of folding, which is of great concern.

Hopefully, as restrictions lift, we will be able to resume a semblance of chorus activity to maximise the next phase of fundraising for this deserving charity.

**Tracy Daniel**  
PRO, Spinnaker Chorus



# Coast to Coast - Meeting More than Ever!

**Coast to** Coast is actually enjoying meeting more regularly than before, once a week via Zoom, instead of once a month in person, although of course we miss this very much. We have a physical and vocal warm up, sing through our current repertoire, then just have some fun with a quiz, with some hilarious results! Several projects are on the go, Kate's romantic garden arbour, Carol's pretty new rockery, Marge's elegant new kitchen, and Marion's battle with the triffids (they're winning!) Kate is starting a brand new club newsletter, club news, recipes, horoscopes, jokes, tips and tricks galore.

Some members have joined online choruses, and one member is singing with the Harmony Brigade, and we are looking forward to a trip to the SABS Convention – sometime soon we hope.

New courses and interests – from British Sign Language to belly dancing! Angela is determined to make us an all singing all dancing group. Other new online courses include music theory, Pilates, Tai Chi and gardening – back to the triffids!

We are very proud of Angela (teacher), Ali (school admin) and Debbie (medical secretary) who are key workers and Marion P who has been supporting the vulnerable with shopping and various acts of kindness.

Congratulations to Ann on her lovely new grandson, and our love and thoughts to former member Helen, whose daughter and granddaughter are both frontline NHS heroes. Just a little snippet to leave you with, the word polecat – it was a very rude Elizabethan term for a wanton woman.

Stay safe all our wonderful LABBS friends.

**Marion Morley**  
Chairman, Coast to Coast





# My Brother the Brave

**On Thursday** 28th May, a lunchtime call out came, and Andrew Sheldon, my brother, jumped in his car and went to fight a fire, which became personal.

My little brother is a retained fire fighter at Stapleford Fire Station. On this particular day he was called out to Harrington School, Long Eaton at 1pm as pump number four, so he knew it was a big fire. He also knew this was where I had been rehearsing with Gem Connection for nearly 20 years.

He bravely fought the fire with his crew and crews from Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. They fought very hard to save the school but to no avail. The school was burned to the ground. Thankfully no children were there and all staff and contractors had been evacuated safely.

All that was left ... was the storeroom that held the risers.

The risers survived!

I eventually got to speak to Andrew the following day. He had just woken up after finally returning home at 9.15am the previous morning. The fire crews were still at the school he told me.

He is so proud of his fire crew and the fire service, and I am so proud of my little brother.

Many of you have stood on those actual risers as they belong to Grand Central and are used on many occasions by LABBS for competition.

One day in the future, who knows when, we will all stand on those risers again, all thanks to my little brother and the brave fire crews.

**Georgina Gascoigne**  
**Gem Connection**



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"All that was left was the storeroom that held the risers."

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# Helping harmony around the world

**The World** Harmony Council (WHC) supports barbershop groups around the globe and has 15 national or regional barbershop organisations as members including LABBS. There is a six-person Board and I was voted into the WHC team as Vice-President at large in 2014.

The goals of the WHC are to support the promotion and growth of barbershop on a worldwide basis. We do some of this through the provision of grants to quartets or individuals to attend education at BHS Harmony University or elsewhere and then to bring that learning home to their region and local groups to help attract more members and hopefully grow into a new national association.

We have had some success in this and have recently supported the establishment of French, Italian, Czechian and South American associations. They are certainly small to begin with, but our hope is to connect them with other established groups and share knowledge and opportunities to grow.

In May, WHC brought together leaders from all global barbershop organisations for a meeting via Zoom to share their thoughts and contributions on learnings from the pandemic. It was truly positive to see the stories and suggestions that arose and the innovation that has been shared has helped organisations across the world continue to work to engage members over this period.

The main funding of the WHC comes from a showcase – usually an annual event held at BHS international where all member groups can send representatives – this year would have been Avalon representing LABBS and we are sorry it couldn't happen. In the meantime, please keep an eye out for other WHC activity as we weave it into events such as the EBC 2021 and hope to bring the world harmony back to us all!

**Alison Liddell**  
**Vice-President at large**  
**World Harmony Council**



*Pzazz representing LABBS at the WHC showcase in 2017*



# Sound Central adapting to different times

**Well it's** been a bit of a crazy year so far! We're lucky enough to have SABS and the Europeans to look forward to next spring but nothing can compensate for the cancellation of all our wonderful regional competitions and showcases.

We were so disappointed to hear that convention would be cancelled in our championship year and, as a result, prelims. However the organisation wasn't going to let us get away without doing a bit of work on its behalf and we were given the perfect platform at LABBSi.

We chose the tag 'The Unreachable Star/Impossible Dream' which seemed rather appropriate at this time. We had an absolute ball talking to and teaching everyone, it was so wonderful to be back in the 'barbershop bubble'. And that first appearance led to the big idea .....Alternative Prelims!

From that point on it was full steam ahead to create and agree a program for a three hour, interactive virtual event.

As three hours is a long time to listen to one quartet we had the pleasure of sharing the afternoon with our barbershop buddies, the fabulous Barberlicious and awesome Venus Effect who shared their journeys so far.

In the absence of a post prelims party we also included games and prizes (well it wouldn't have been prelims without would it?) and hope people enjoyed Jen's Barbershop Bingo and Sarah's Generation Game - cuddly toy included!

However our favourite part of the afternoon was the opportunity to showcase the talent of our wonderful LABBS quartets. The compilation created served to demonstrate the outstanding talent we have here in British Ladies Barbershop.

And finally, we have to reflect on the most poignant part of the afternoon. A tribute to our friend, the lovely Wendy Conboy, who sadly left us the week before prelims. A beautiful lady, inside and out, who sang



with her best friends in Blonde Ambition Quartet and Milltown Sound. You will be forever missed.

All that remains to say, is that we've managed to work on some projects that we're pretty proud of but nothing replaces that feeling of locking and ringing chords together.

**Jen, Suzanne, Sarah, Bev**

# *Cornish Holiday*

*Glorious Cornwall,  
you will never want  
to go home!*



**2 BEDROOM HOUSE**  
Meadow Rise, St Columb Major



**4 BEDROOM BEACH HOUSE**  
Bodannon, Porthtowan

At Cornish Holiday we offer wonderful, self-catering accommodation in Cornwall. Our properties are inspected every year and receive a star rating by Visit England, a wonderful way to reassure you and give peace of mind when booking your stay. Every year Cornish Holiday donates to Cancer Research UK and by staying with us helps fund vital research. There really is nowhere better to spend time and create memories which will last forever.

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# Seasons of Love

**It's almost** two years since we lost Helen Reid, our dear friend and member of Cheshire A Cappella. She was the most kind-hearted, sweet-natured, generous lady you could ever wish to meet. She was also a real Cheshire lady, hosting many a fabulous party for us at her beautiful home in Alderley Edge, also often the venue for our extra special bass section rehearsals.

Helen was a sun-worshipper; she absolutely loved her holidays, playing bridge and singing with us. We have particularly special memories of SABS 2018 in

Benalmadena. We were performing Over the Rainbow and being the softie that she was, Helen struggled to sing the song, even in rehearsal, without shedding a tear. On competition day she managed it, just!

We were honoured to be invited (all wearing hats, at Helen's request!) to sing 'Over the Rainbow' at her funeral. Helen's husband, Andrew, made a donation to us which we used to have a song, 'Seasons of Love', arranged in her memory.

We also had a plaque engraved to be awarded annually

at the Alderley Edge Music Festival, in Helen's home village where she lived her whole life. As we weren't able to perform 'Seasons of Love' at the festival in April, we have spent the last few weeks making recordings for a virtual choir performance, which will be a fitting and lasting tribute to Helen's memory, with all donations going to the Sepsis Charity. We hope to share this with LABBS in the near future.

**Claire Hawker**  
Chair, Cheshire A Cappella 2016-18



*Helen Reid plaque, Cheshire bass section (Helen third from R)*



# Marilyn Penketh 1945-2020

**Our Mum** Marilyn "found" barbershop back in 1976 at the age of 31 and decided to start her own chorus that same year in our front room. The Havant Ladies Barbershop Harmony Chorus, aka The Pitchpipers, was born and my sister and I wanted to join in too. Toni-Ann, (being the eldest) got to join right from the start and I had to wait until I was eight! Mum was in a quartet with Toni-Ann and two other members (Kathy and Loli) and they called themselves "The Havatones".



Mum threw herself into helping the fledgling organisation of LABBS and became Treasurer first followed by many other posts on the Executive including becoming the Chairman of LABBS in 1987 to 1989. She also was keen to help with the music side of things and helped on several occasions to organise LABBS Harmony Colleges, education days and prelims. She thoroughly enjoyed being an Arrangement Judge and then moving on to the Contest Administration category being the Category Specialist in both areas throughout her time there. She knew pretty much everything there was to know about copyright and helped many LABBS members with obtaining copyright permissions for their contest songs. She was instrumental in getting LABBS computerised (our Dad wrote the programme that LABBS uses and that is used throughout Europe) as well.

One of the highlights for her was to travel with Rhiannon Owens-Hall, Sheila Rice, Sandra Landey and Margaret DeWolf to Providence, Rhode Island where Harmony, Inc. Convention in 1984 was being held to learn about barbershop from them and to offer the

LABBS trophy which is still being presented every year. The connection with Harmony, Inc. started three years before that, when in 1982 an American lady called Ginny Gedney arrived at a Pitchpipers rehearsal. Ginny was a Harmony, Inc. member and had moved to England with her husband and daughter for two years. Ginny and Mum became really good friends and we visited them often when they had to return to America. Mum tried to go to Harmony, Inc. conventions every year to keep in contact with the many friends she made and to represent LABBS. Mum and Karen became associate members more than 25 years ago.

So, back to The Pitchpipers. Mum always had the desire to bring theatre to the LABBS contest stage and first did this in 1985 with 'In the Little Red School House' and 'Barefoot Days'.



Some of you may remember that in Blackpool in 1986 we did an American Football set with 'All American Girl' and 'Mr Touchdown USA'.



We followed this with a Flapper set in '89, Pirates and The Navy sets in the early '90s, World War I and then we did the "monster set" with 'Strike up the Band' medley and 'Changes Made' medley with an awesome costume change mid song!



There have been many more themed sets and The Pitchpipers have always aimed to entertain the audience and we reckon they have achieved that, thanks to Marilyn.

As well as the chorus Mum was in several quartets over the years both competing and non-competing. She just loved singing and wanted to bring the joy of barbershop to everyone she met. She loved LABBS, she loved Harmony Inc., she loved travelling and going to see as many barbershop conventions all over the world as possible. There is so much more we could write but we will leave this now with a heartfelt thanks to all the barbershoppers all over the world who knew Mum and who helped make her life full of song.

Mum and The Pitchpipers did a lot of charity fundraising for a local hospice, The Rowans, and if you would like to donate to them that would be wonderful. They were amazing at helping Mum in the last few days of her life and we are eternally grateful for their compassion and dedication. <https://www.rowanshospice.co.uk/donate/>

**Karen and Toni-Ann**



# Marilyn Penketh 1945-2020

**The Board** was saddened to learn that Marilyn Penketh passed away at home on Sunday 24th May.

Marilyn was known to many of you and I know that we all admired and appreciated her dedication, commitment and contribution to LABBS over many years – as a LABBS member, founder and chorus director of The Pitchpipers, past LABBS Chairman, LABBS Treasurer, copyright expert, contest administrator and member of the Education and Judging team. She was also a LABBS Liaison Officer and very supportive of the LABBS relationship with Harmony, Inc. in the US. The list is endless and shows just how much LABBS and the barbershop world meant to Marilyn, and she will be missed.

**Nancy Philbin on behalf of the LABBS Board**



## Messages from friends:

**Jacqui Edwards**

Marilyn was extremely good with, and supportive of, Thameside for many years, always jumping in when I asked her to and “rescuing” them when they had no MD, needed someone to take a sing-out, helping with learn-to-sing courses, etc.

I always admired her courage and no-one could ever

question her loyalty to LABBS and barbershop, as her connection to Thameside and other choruses showed. She also did a lot with Cascade, organising joint sing-outs, taking occasional evenings when they had no MD. She was always there for any group/person that needed her - an unsung and unknown part of this lady. I feel as though an era has passed - I've known her for such a long time.

**Margaret de Wolf**

Marilyn was one of the bravest people that I have ever known and fought her illness with a stoicism and determination that is rarely seen and I am proud to have known her.

Marilyn joined LABBS a year after it was founded; I



*Margaret de Wolf; Sheila Rice; Sandra Landey; Marilyn Penketh with ladies from Harmony Inc, 1984*

remember that as I was Membership Secretary at the time! What might have been lost in the mists of time is that she was one of the four LABBS representatives (also Sheila Rice, Sandra Landey and me) who went to the States in 1984 to cement the budding friendship with Harmony Inc.

**Thelma Grant**

I knew Marilyn very well and I was so shocked to hear that she had passed away.

When Liverpool Ladies had not been to convention for several years Marilyn was the first woman to greet me. “Do you remember me?” I asked her. “Of course I do”, she replied, and we gave each other a big hug. Rest in peace, lovely lady.

**Lee Westlake**

Thank you for the email about my friend Marilyn, how lovely for newer members who did not know her well to hear what a hard worker she has been for LABBS - her hard work and efforts will never be forgotten. Marilyn has been a shining star for LABBS since she brought her chorus, the Pitchpipers, into our new association in 1976. Sadly she was not a founder member but she was everything else and more, throwing all her energy and talent into helping LABBS become this amazing singing association that it is. She shared her love of LABBS with her two daughters Toni Ann and Karen who are quartet gold medalists, and John, her husband, who developed software for us.



# Repertoire Choices for the 21st Century

**Back in** the days when we could go to Convention and sit next to people, a fellow audience member told me a story about their club's Learn to Sing course. One of their participants, a singer of colour, was very enthusiastic and shaping up well as a potential new chorus member. Then someone taught a Dixie tag, and they never saw that singer again.

This story summarises the two big problems with songs celebrating the old American South that were mainstays of barbershop repertoire throughout the twentieth century. First, they celebrate a culture that was built on the systematic exploitation of Black people, and second, it is very easy for white Europeans not to realise this.

When the UK imported barbershop in the 1960s and 1970s, the genre had been almost entirely severed from its African American roots. The actual colour bars in both the BHS and SAI had been rescinded in the later 1960s, but until the publication of Lynn Abbott's article about the African American origins of the style in 1992, the official narrative ignored that heritage in favour of spurious attempts to trace European roots.

It is not then surprising that we largely failed to perceive the signs of segregation and oppression encoded in some of the repertoire we imported with the style. We took the nostalgia for magnolias and moonlight at face value as generic Americana, without noticing that the idyll we celebrated was built on the backs of slave labour.

There were occasional clues: references to cotton and sugar cane, the main cash crops on which the plantation owners grew rich, or references to 'Mammy', often misunderstood to mean 'mother' rather than the stereotype of the matronly slave who cared for her white owner's children. Many of the songs were bowdlerised to hide their origins: it was 'voices' rather than the original 'darkies' who sang 'soft and low' on the delta, but still nonetheless evoked the self-serving myth that slaves had been happy on the plantations.

Sometimes the information was right on the surface to be seen, but its significance lost on people with a different cultural background. When I heard 'Waiting for the Robert E Lee' at my first Convention in 1996, I had no idea the boat was named after someone famous for defending the 'right' to own slaves.

Unfortunately, not all our audiences are as oblivious as we once were. It is clear from my opening anecdote that Dixie nostalgia can be as off-putting to British people of colour as it is to African-Americans. And my Generation X contemporaries often remark how much more aware their teenage and young adult children are than we were at their age. Just because something feels like a classic, well-loved barbershop song won't prevent it deterring potential new members from demographics we actively wish to attract.

One of the features of European barbershop contests in the last few years has been the influx of songs new to the barbershop stage. This has been energising for audiences and performers alike, and means that we are already well-placed to move on from Dixie nostalgia.

Instead of preserving the style with songs that celebrate discredited values of the past, we can do so through refreshing both repertoire and membership. It is time we made the genre a safe and welcoming place again for those who created it.

**Dr Liz Garnett is the author of *The British Barbershopper: A Study in Socio-Musical Values***




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"We took the nostalgia for moonlight and magnolias at face value"

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