

Voice Box

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



Spring 2025 £4

Ringling in the New Year...



Chair's Foreword

Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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Deadline for next edition: Friday 25th April 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 July, Friday 7th November.

Hello Again Everyone. This is my last time writing to you in VoiceBox as your Chair. I have to express my thanks to everyone who has worked with me for the past two years and during the previous two years when I was Vice Chair. Your Board is a very supportive and constructive group of people, and it has been an honour to be part of it. I will continue to be part of the Board for one more year as Past Chair, which is a good feature of our usual procedures aimed at ensuring continuity. Our very efficient Vice Chair, Jill Cook, is waiting in the wings to be presented to Council as our proposed Chair for 2025 and 2026. Your team is currently working hard on planning Prelims and Convention 2025 and as usual these will be overwhelmingly managed and run by volunteers. At the time of writing, we have a

vacancy on the Board. The Marketing and Communications Directorship has been unfilled for several months and this is the first time in my four years on the Board that we have had a vacancy for such a long time. Hopefully it will be filled before this edition is published. However, without volunteers coming forward for these roles, your Association cannot provide all the events and services that we have become accustomed to, so please consider whether you would be able to contribute as a volunteer in any of our areas of work, particularly when you see our vacancy ads. As we move on into Spring, I am sure that all the groups going to Denver to represent us at the Barbershop Harmony Society International Contest will be getting excited and putting in a lot of rehearsal time.



We wish them well and are proud of all of our representatives. Our Events Team and Education and Judging Team are also both working hard to prepare for our Prelims and Convention 2025. The Association continues to grow, and I look forward to a great year in 2025 and a fantastic anniversary year in 2026. So that's me signing off for the last time as your Chair.

Sue Ranson

Update from your Editor

It's probably a little late by the time this edition is published to wish everyone a Happy New Year, so I'd like to say a thank you instead. Thank you to all the contributors to VoiceBox, particularly all the Public Relation Officers (PROs) and chorus members who write articles and submit photos. I often need to query or clarify various aspects of the articles that come in, through no fault of the contributors. From the small things, such as checking abbreviations, to the often tricky task of making sure photos

are of the right quality for publication. So, a big thank you to everyone for taking all this in such good humour when I understand how picky I must seem! VoiceBox is not just available to LABBS members. Now that it appears digitally on the LABBS website, it can be accessed by anyone online, and we want to maintain our professional image and showcase all the wonderful things our organisation gets up to as best we can. In this edition, I hope you'll enjoy reading about all the exciting plans our



members have for 2025 as much as I have. I wish everyone all the very best for a fabulous year ahead and look forward to reading all about it.

Victoria Chin
VoiceBox Editor

How well does your chorus website work for you?

If you are considering revamping or finding a new home for your club or quartet website, I would strongly recommend moving to the HarmonySite platform, developed by a barbershopper for barbershoppers all over the world.

- If you:
- want a site that is automatically mobile-friendly
 - want something easy to update, as it's very similar to formatting in a Word doc
 - want a site that neatly combines your public image and a private member area
 - want a site which out-of-the-box has all the tools and functionality you could ever need for running a chorus more efficiently than ever
 - want a site that enables other chorus roles to get on with doing things relevant to them, and share the responsibility for updating it instead of leaving it all up to one person
 - want a site that takes care of individual member logins and is easy to manage mailing lists
 - want the option of a members' mobile app with the essentials to take on-the-go.

Once you understand the basics of editing (very simple once you know how) and how everything hangs together, it's quite simple to create something that looks professional. Admin becomes so much easier compared to managing members and activities with google sheets and doodles, so you can spend more time on what we're here for - spending time together making great music.

If any club (or quartet!) wants to find out more about HarmonySite and what it can offer, for now or the future, or are in the midst of setting up a new HarmonySite website and need guidance, or if you have an existing site and get stuck with something in particular and need help, please contact the LABBS Website Manager and LLO Debi Cox on llo-debi@labbs.org.uk and she'll be happy to help you.

Debi Cox, LABBS Website Manager and LLO



Creating Club Management Resources

When I took on the role of Vice-Chair in March 2023, I gave myself the challenge of creating a suite of guides for Club committees, accessible to all members. This was based on my view that we had a vast amount of knowledge, experience and expertise across our Association that could and should be shared. I collaborated with expert members across a variety of clubs to draft the guides, and each one was reviewed and agreed by the LABBS Board before being published on the website. I'm pleased to report that we now have a Club Management Resources section in the members' area of the LABBS website that includes existing guides and newly created ones, on everything from creating a club constitution to recruiting an MD.

The advisory guides include:

- Recruitment guide (with resources and case studies)
- Running a learn to sing course (with materials)
- Chorus roles & responsibilities
- Becoming a registered charity
- Organising a chorus retreat
- Membership retention and engagement
- Harmonious leadership for MDs and Chairs

The functional guides include:

- Effective leadership for Club Chairs
- A guide to the role of Membership Secretary
- A Treasurer's guide

The latest guide, on the role of a Public Relations Officer (PRO) is currently being written and will be published shortly. Please do take a look and take advantage of the fact that we have so much experience between us. Volunteers' time is precious, and the guides can avoid reinventing wheels and give new ideas to consider. These resources are all part of the value of being a LABBS member. If you think of other topics for new guides that would be useful, please get in touch.

Jill Cook, LABBS Vice-Chair



Have you thought about having Convention somewhere else?

What about the Midlands?

As you know members of the Board enjoy getting out and talking with members, and the questions we are asked most frequently are 'Have you thought about a different venue for convention?', and 'Why don't we have a venue in the Midlands?'

Well, I can tell you all that the whole Board is in sympathy with the idea of finding different venues and our Events Director, Kristina Mair, has looked at many venues around the country. There are a number of reasons why we and our BABS friends come back to Harrogate and Bournemouth.

Firstly, we need a very specific type of venue. We need the right size auditorium and stage, sufficient warm up rooms and extensive spaces for dressing rooms and social spaces. We also need there to be sufficient reasonably priced hotel space within reach of the venue. But there is one overriding consideration and that is cost.

The BABS and LABBS conventions have been held at

Harrogate and Bournemouth for some time, and we receive preferential rates. This means that if we approach a different venue that seems like it might be suitable, we are a new customer and the price that is quoted is higher than we are used to paying. For example, one venue in the Midlands has quoted us more than our whole convention budget for just one day's hire.

As you see, the Board is trying to balance location, facilities and cost and at present we have not found anywhere that provides the cost benefits of Harrogate and Bournemouth while offering all the facilities we currently enjoy. Convention already regularly costs more than we take in selling passes and show tickets so it would not be prudent to move to a venue with significantly higher associated costs. Having said all this, if anyone has suggestions for venues, we are always ready to explore the options. We have not given up!

Sue Ranson

Exciting news from the Muddy Stiletto camp...

We have a brand-new little voice to welcome into the fold! Our tenor's baby boy has arrived, and he's already stealing hearts.

Ronnie William James made his grand debut on Monday, 13th January (sharing his birthday with his proud Nana!) at precisely 5:08 pm, weighing in at a healthy 8lb 8oz. Mum and baby are both doing brilliantly, though Ronnie is reportedly keeping his vocal warm-ups strictly to the middle of the night for now (future barbershopper in the making, perhaps?).

While he's still working on his pitch and timing, Ronnie has already claimed honorary Muddy status, helping us to win our gold medal last year and is eagerly awaiting his first rehearsal. We are so proud as his quartet auntsies and can't wait to sing to our little man, but we're pretty sure he'll save his critiques for the lullabies Mum's been practicing!

It's been a whirlwind few months for the Muddy Stilettoes. Not only are we thrilled to welcome Ronnie, but we also had the incredible honour of performing our first sing-out as the LABBS Gold Medallist Quartet at the Viva Acappella Christmas show in December. The concert was

a complete sell-out, and we had an absolute blast spreading festive cheer with an audience that brought so much energy and joy.

We couldn't be happier for our tenor and her beautiful family. Muddy Stilettoes are counting down the days until we can officially meet our newest member in person and, who knows, maybe we'll let him call the shots on our next set list.

Here's to Ronnie, our little Mudlet – welcome to the gang!

Hannah, Colette, Chantel, and Christine Muddy Stilettoes



Our tenor, Hannah, and baby Ronnie

IN HOUSE Quartet Hits the High Notes

As we gear up for the European

Championships in May 2025, representing LABBS is no small task. We've been hard at work perfecting our singing, polishing our performance, and, let's be honest, figuring out how to fit it all in between endless cups of tea and the occasional biscuit raid.

We rang in the festive season in true quartet style: with our chorus buddies, plenty of dancing, drinks, and some spectacular dancing attempts. Happy December, indeed! This new year, we're back in rehearsals, sharpening every move and lyric. After all, Europeans isn't just about the glory, it's about making sure we hit every note and step without a hitch.

Our belated Christmas get-together confirmed one thing: we're great at eating and drinking! While the other diners enjoyed a quiet meal (for once, we gave the singing a rest), we enjoyed good food, plenty of laughs, and a well-earned night off.

2025 is already shaping up to be an exciting year for IN HOUSE Quartet, and we can't wait to share it with you. Now, if you'll excuse us, we're off for some serious rehearsals, and probably a few more cups of tea!



Julie, Jo, Jane and Rachel
IN HOUSE

Perception

Perception (LABBS senior champs 2022) were delighted to be invited again to be part of the annual Christmas Tree Festival at Ide Hill Church in December.

We enjoy singing in this lovely old church and our two sets of Christmas songs, especially 'The Twelve Days After Christmas' went down a storm – appropriate as Storm Darragh was making its presence felt outside!

The evening finished with the auctioning of the beautiful Christmas trees decorated by local clubs and the grand total for the event was an impressive £4,492.00, all going to the "Toilet and facilities fund".

We're already looking forward to the next concert.

Anne, Julie, Glynis & Meryl
Perception Quartet



Barbie Day

More than 200

barbershoppers and barber-novices took time out from the Real World in February to learn the Barbie film anthem 'Dance The Night' at Amersham A Cappella's maiden *Sing with Amersham* day. Singers aged eight to eighty – including a few Kens – dolled themselves up in Barbie pink and travelled from across England to the event in High Wycombe, Bucks.

Barbie is AAC's mascot and the Dua Lipa song was arranged for the day by the talented Boo de Bruin, an Amersham assistant director, who organised the event. AAC performance chief Flash Watson brought pink panache to the choreo while MD Helen Lappert gave the song its forever glow of pink perfection.

Tracks and the score for Boo's energetic four-part showpiece were sent to singers before the event, which was handsomely sponsored by Marlow-based Hands on Health Osteopathy, run by AAC bass Jane Kaushal.

But for those whose notes weren't quite faultless, AAC section leaders Sarah Hooker, Amanda Dawson, Kerry Stenning and Fi Stuttaford led comprehensive section practices to iron out anything tricky.

An array of reviving Barbie-themed cakes welcomed singers during the breaks. The hottest cakes, though, were the six incredible hampers put together by Jen Franklin and raffled to raise funds for AAC's trip to Denver this summer. Alongside Cheshire Chord Company and the mixed chorus LUX A Cappella, Amersham will be representing LABBS at the Barbershop

Harmony Society's International Convention. First edition AAC cookbooks, handmade bow ties and homemade chilli jam were also on offer.

Barbie was at our day too, of course, in a sparkling outfit borrowed from one of her sisters. She's always with us backstage – or centre stage – in a matching, specially made costume. Her CV includes trips to the 2012 Olympics and to Twickenham, where AAC sang before England took on Barbarians. She streaked across the pitch at that one. So embarrassing.

Thank you to those who came to our Barbie day and threw so much energy into it. Your feedback has been brilliant. Fingers crossed it's the first of many *Sing with Amersham* events!

Cath Harris
Amersham A Cappella



Barbie-themed cake



L-R: AAC's Sue, Cath, Jules, Hayley and Jen, purveyors of cookbooks, chilli jam and hot-ticket hampers



The Kens



L-R: Boo de Bruin, Flash Watson and Helen Lappert



Jane Kaushal, Hands on Health Osteopathy



The whole crowd

Bristol Fashion - the one with the Donkey

There is no better way

to start the New Year than with an 'Awards dinner and Bristol Fashion's Got Talent night'. For a moment however, it felt like the wheels might fall off this well-oiled ceremony machine as coughs, cold and chest infections ran rife over the Christmas break, scuppering four different quartets.

Luckily the Bristol Fashion spirit prevailed and an evening of hilarious and slightly (ahem!) out of the box entertainment ensued:

Cue SONIC trio and their 20 question quiz about - themselves! We now know whose arms are the same length, who has an aversion to metal on metal and how many tents our collective bronze medallists own. When we stopped laughing - scores were totted up and Kehoe's table won the crowns and sashes!

Next up poems with Hewitt - less pun and more pondering from the wonderful

winner of this year's Kindness, Love and Inspiration Award.

Performance Award Winner, Penfold, then caused mayhem and a lot of 'HeeHaw' with her audience participation of the 'Wonky Donkey' story. I am not sure who was more delighted - the guests (very merry by this time) or the bar staff who were simply crying with laughter and disbelief!

Games continued with 'A Giant Pair of Pants Scavenger Hunt' and of course the annual 'After Dinner Mint Face Race'!

Our Chair, Fliss, was delighted to be awarded 'Most Improved Barbershopper' following her move from Lead to Baritone, and Craig gave a heartfelt tribute to her admirable leadership and driving energy.

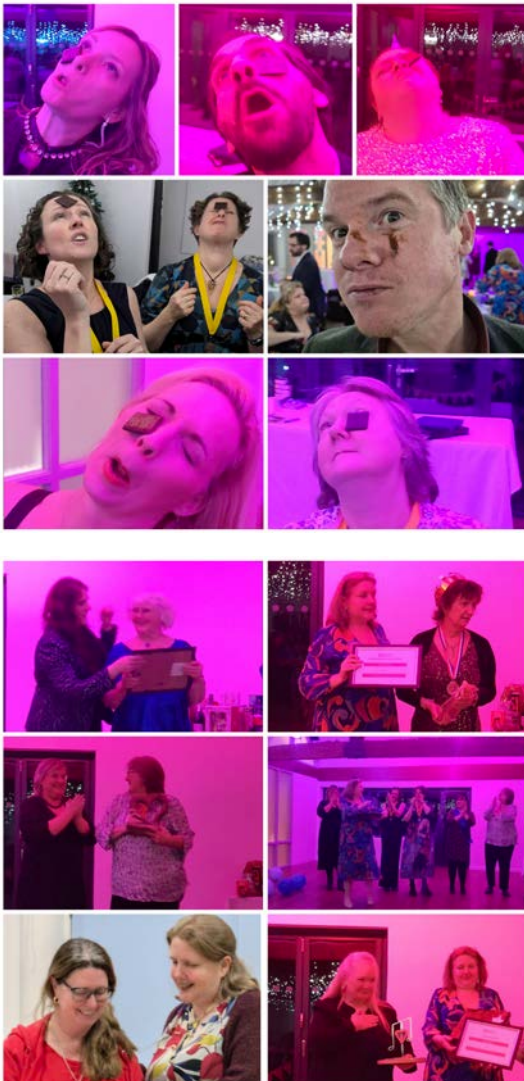
Fliss's own Chairperson award went to Liz Jackson for her beautifully thoughtful handcrafted birthday cards

and to Liz Blues for her website work and 'fixed it' support.

The evening concluded with a Disco and DJ Lucy Barker playing more bangers than a fireworks night in November.

Final words though must be for our wonderful Lead Section Leader Janis. Winner of the Barbershopper of the Year (BOTY) award - Smithers was overwhelmed and accepted the award with a tearful 'it's only taken 21 years!' We really couldn't believe that she had never won before! The thing is Janis really is a marvel. She is kind, caring, hard working, dedicated, passionate and modest. She hosts our Coaches, champions Bristol Fashion at every event, is our Events Manager, part of the PRO team and simply loves barbershop. Janis could be BOTY every year and we are all so very grateful to have her.

**Debbie Trotman, PRO team
Bristol Fashion**



Janis with her 'BOTY' award

Makes, Bakes, Books and Blooms: The wonderful world of Bristol Fashion's 'Whatsapp' groups

The underpinning of any great community is the shared feeling of belonging, trust, and support that binds them together. During lockdown, when Covid stole the chance for us to meet together, BF embraced social media and started multiple 'Whatsapp' groups where members could share, support and appreciate each other's interests. Today these groups are still going strong. We have followed the renovation of Craig and Vonny's new garden

within the 'Potting shed', made huge lists of next reads from the book recommendations and reviews in BF bookworms, tried out recipes including replicating Lisa's sourdough starter, called 'Samantha'!! (it's living therefore needs a name) and been in awe of the amazing makes within the crafty corner group (I now want to learn to crochet and make a temperature blanket). In the midst of these group interactions there is a wealth of support, love and kindness shown to each other. When we sadly lose members from the chorus,

they often decide to keep the connection going by staying on in these groups, for example our resident astronomer and lunar expert Debbie N, who left chorus a few years ago is still an active member of the bookworm group, giving us updates of the moon cycle and meteor showers to watch out for! How lucky are we? What a testament to the ongoing connections we nurture within BF.

**Ruth Fowler, PRO team
Bristol Fashion**



Unforgettable Moments...

The past three months at Cheshire Chord Company

have been absolutely amazing, filled with unforgettable moments and exciting milestones. From heart-warming performances to festive celebrations, we've cherished every opportunity to share our love of music. On top of that, we're hard at work preparing for our upcoming appearance at the prestigious Barbershop Harmony Society competition in Denver, where we'll proudly represent LABBS, fine-tuning every note and harmony to make our performance truly unforgettable.

We kicked things off by singing and supporting at a wonderful fundraising concert for our previous chair's charity. It was uplifting to see so many of you there. Your generosity has made a real difference to Music & Memory Warrington, a fantastic charity dedicated to bringing joy and connection to those affected by dementia. With next year marking their ninth anniversary, we're proud to have contributed to their ongoing mission. Thank you for helping us support such meaningful work, your kindness truly matters!

December was nothing short of magical. We celebrated the season in style, starting with our fantastic Christmas party on the 1st of December. The evening was filled with joy, laughter, and festive spirit as we kicked off the holiday season together.

Shortly after, we brought even more holiday cheer to The Rams Head in Grappenhall. The atmosphere was

absolutely electric, filled with merriment, music, and plenty of Christmas spirit. We loved every moment of spreading joy to our community!

Fast forward to January, and we've already hit the ground running despite the winter weather trying to hold us back! Our first rehearsal of 2025 may have been delayed by snow and ice, but nothing can stop us from singing with the help of Zoom! January saw us celebrating another fantastic year at Cheshire Chord Company's AGM with heartfelt thanks to the 2024 committee and a warm welcome to the new committee as they take the reins for an exciting year ahead. Two special awards were presented during this memorable evening: Kath Whitehouse received Joanne Braham's Special Award for Achievement for her outstanding contributions to the chorus, and Bernie Homer-Regan was honoured with the prestigious Julia Bird Award for her remarkable dedication and spirit. We recently had an incredible rehearsal day, diving deep into our preparations for the road to Denver. Every note we sing is bringing us closer to our goals, and we can't wait to

reveal some of the amazing songs we've been working on. Trust us, it'll be worth the wait!

Julie Phillips, PRO
Cheshire Chord Company



Bernie (second left), being presented with the Julia Bird award by Julia's close friend Julie (actual award forgotten on the night so stand in used!), Kath (far right) being presented with the MD's award by Jo



From Stage Sparkle to Festive Cheer

Anyone remember Cleeve Harmony striking those

fabulous poses on the convention stage back in October? What a moment! But what happened after that? Well, there was no time to rest - November arrived, Christmas folders in hand, and we were off spreading festive cheer!

Our first stop? A new venue for us! This year, we took our carolling to the Women's Institute, filling the room with harmonies and holiday spirit. Storm Darragh may have been howling, but we didn't let a bit of wind stop us. We made our way over the hill to picturesque Winchcombe, ready to

entertain shoppers at their Christmas market. Originally set to sing in an outdoor marquee, the storm had other plans. The organisers saved the day by relocating us to the balcony of the former Methodist church, now the Isbourne Arts, a busy space for community events. So, we had a chance to sing from above with a bird's-eye view of the festive scene.

No Christmas season is complete without our annual Carols at the Barn. Tithe Barn was filled with warmth and music as we welcomed the local community for an afternoon of song and good company. With a rousing rendition of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', dedicated family members,

and fantastic volunteers working behind the scenes, we served up mince pies, warm drinks, and plenty of festive joy. We raised an impressive £450 for Gloucestershire Bundles, a charity supporting local families.

With the holiday decorations packed away, we're diving into Love to Sing! We're all hard at work on 'A Thousand Years', straight from Twilight. Hopefully, it won't take us quite that long to master the four-part harmonies, but in just four weeks, we'll be ready to share it at our Friends and Family demo night.

**Sandra Cakla, PRO
Cleeve Harmony**



Cleeve Harmony spreading Christmas joy at Tithe Barn



Cleeve Harmony at their glam moment - celebrating their highs and lows and looking ahead to whatever the future holds

Crystal Chords Love to Sing!

Without a LABBS convention for

US in 2024, we took the opportunity to hold a Love to Sing course in October and November to boost our numbers. We had 35 people sign up and learn A Thousand Years over five weeks, ending with a fabulous showcase for friends and family. So far NINE of them have returned as trainees. What a sparkling start to 2025 for Crystals.

Since then, we've had a few other choruses ask us how we did it, so we wanted to share with you our successes and lessons learned.

1. We picked an easy and well-known song - A Thousand Years. Chorus got it a few weeks earlier so some did learn it in advance, just so we could be fairy steps ahead and we knew it would sound good for our newcomers. We only sang it once as a chorus beforehand though. The music and performance team learned it in full and sang it to everyone on week one.

2. We didn't provide the music or tracks to new people until they actually turned up on day one, but they knew which song we were learning. This was on the grounds that we didn't want everyone to pick lead (although that largely happened anyway!) and we wanted the first thing they heard to be real live singing, not teach tracks.

3. We chose to charge £10 a ticket. Even a small fee is a commitment, whereas free equals easy to skip on the day if something comes up/are a little nervous etc. Plus, it portrays value to what you are selling.

4. Each week we did 1.5 hours with the love to sing cohort and then after our break, Crystals had our own rehearsal to do other music and prep for concerts. In that one and a half hours we had our typical 20 mins ish warm up then a bit of section time learning then putting it all together. The love to sing participants were welcome to stay and listen for the second half.

5. We broke it down for five weeks. The first three weeks were learning the music, week four was consolidation and choreography and week five was a showcase for friends and family.



6. On week one we provided a goody bag to all that signed up. This was a tote bag with our branding on it and inside was the sheet music, typed out lyrics, a bottle of water, a pencil, some chorus info, and a packet of love hearts. This was to add value to their experience and show us as organised and professional. Our left-over tote bags were sold back to chorus members for £5 which recouped most of their cost.

7. The all important numbers -

- Sign-ups (for £10) - 35
- Turn ups on day one - 32
- Stayed to the end - 22
- Returned post course - 9 (25% which is a great conversion rate!)
- Cost - about £1,000 (print adverts, paid social media, posters, goody bags)
- Funding - £350 ticket sales
- Funding - £650 from a local grant

(We didn't need to use the available LABBS grant as our fundraising has been so successful. But don't forget that this is available towards any additional costs incurred.)

8. What would we do differently? Timing. The weather in November was terrible for a couple of weeks so many people just couldn't turn up as they were snowed in. This lost us a

couple of attendees and some of the momentum. It was also then followed by four weeks off due to Christmas holidays and Christmas sing outs, so again we lost a little momentum.

9. What would we do again? We would keep the recruitment strategy the same - high spend, high effort, high reward!

Good luck to everyone doing a spring Love to Sing. Hopefully you'll have lots of success too.

**Laura Orton, PRO
Crystal Chords**



Food, Fundraising and Friendship for the GEMs

To end 2024, the GEMs held our annual Christmas Coffee and Mince Pie Evening, which was well supported by family and friends.

Our audience participation gave us an amusing time singing the "Twelve Days of Christmas" and some of our friends also joined the GEMs to learn the tag of "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas".

We had our donation boxes out to receive donations for our chosen charity of the year, and we were pleased to have raised over £400 for a local charity "The Cannan Trust", which supports homeless women in our area.

To end our evening, our "Sparkly Gem Badges" were awarded to our two newest members, Lauren and Jane, as they became fully fledged GEMs.

At the end of January, the GEMs laid on catering for the Extreme Quartet's Quartetting Weekend which was held at our rehearsal venue. The weekend was enjoyed by everyone, and it turned out to be a great fundraiser for us too.

Now as 2025 is well under way, we are busy extending our repertoire with a range of new songs and looking forward to the next few months to keep us busy.

Jenny Smedley, PRO
GEM Connection



GEM Catering Weekend

In with the new....

Shortly after Convention we welcomed

another new member when Claire Page passed her audition. Claire sings Baritone and although new to Barbershop, has previously sung in choirs and taught drama. Basically, Claire loves all things theatrical so will fit in well.

Later in November, more Baritone news came when Vicky gave birth to her first baby, a daughter whom Vicky and her husband have named Elowyn 'Winnie' Rose. Vicky is taking a short break from the chorus while she settles into life as a new mum. The Chorus is not without regular updates though because Vicky's mum, Alison, shares news and photos at rehearsals.

Amongst the usual AGM business in December, the inaugural Long Service Awards took place. Certificates were presented to several members in recognition of their 'Commitment to Harmony InSpires and the craft of singing'. The longest serving member recognised for 20 Years service (initially with the chorus's former chorus named Ridgeway Harmony) was Sandie Helm, then followed certificates recognising service from 10-16 years to many others.

Other Awards included the Musical Director's Awards for Jenny Priscott for her all-round energy and commitment

and for Jo Birtles for her 100% attendance. The chorus voted overwhelmingly for Michele Steel as their Barbershopper of the Year.

Three new Trustees were voted in, formerly mentioned Alison Berry who takes over the role of Treasurer, Dawn Emmett as Deputy Chair and Caroline Green as Public Relations Officer. Sing-outs included Oxford Etsy Christmas Market where we performed a variety of repertoire for stall holders and shoppers alike and Sobell House Lights of Love Remembrance service.

The year concluded with our Christmas party. With a buffet, seasonal games, musical performance and a short pantomime! The highlight was unwrapping a personalised Christmas tree bauble after names were allocated in a Secret Santa style draw.

Lastly, we have just taken part in the Oxford Music Festival. We performed our 2024 Convention set in the Open Barbershop class and gained 'Exceptional': 95-100%, and in Women's Choir class we gained 'Outstanding': 90-94%. This was such a positive way to begin the year.

Caroline Green, PRO
Harmony InSpires



New member Claire Page



Vicky Thatcher with her new daughter

Winter with Junction 14 Ladies A Cappella

Winter is always a busy time

for Junction 14 with quite a few performances, mainly with the Christmas repertoire and the odd social event or two!

Our first was in November at a lovely church in Stony Stratford which hosts its 'Third Thursday at Twelve Thirty Club'. We performed to a wonderful audience in a lovely setting.

A week later, we had a lovely evening meal organised by our social team at a local Indian restaurant. At the end of the evening, we sang three songs with applause from the other customers dining there.

On the 7th December we held a Christmas Celebrations Concert for family and friends with refreshments and the usual mince pies! Next on the 10th December we performed to the residents of a local care home, who have us back each year and who really enjoy our performances and often join in.

Two nights later we were performing at the Milton Keynes railway station concourse. Singing to the very generous commuters is great fun to do. Members of our charity this year, MND, came along to help collect cash in the collection buckets. We brought some Christmas cheer to the weary workers/shoppers returning home to Milton Keynes.

Junction 14 rehearse in a lovely room at a local retirement village and our last performance before Christmas was to the residents of this village and to our family and friends. Afterwards we retired to the bar in the village for a Christmas drink.

January started off with our New Year social dinner, with quizzes, a raffle and awards to members of Junction 14 who



Outside the church at Stony Stratford after the Third Thursday at Twelve Thirty Club club performance

have been with our chorus for 25 years or more. We also had great pleasure in giving Grace Morrison her long service award for 40 years' membership of LABBS.

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**



Junction 14 at Milton Keynes railway station concourse

London City Singers Go International

London City Singers were honoured to join LABBS in 2023 and since then we haven't stood still. Our mission to combine barbershop with the most out-there influences we can think of has seen us invent Beyoncé-shop and give Britney and Steps the barbershop shine. Our last convention performance, for which we were delighted to be awarded the 'BABS Entertainment Trophy' as well as being placed third overall, saw us pinning for Taylor the Latte Boy and channelling a singing crocodile. So where could we go from here? Well, in the words of Lyle Lyle himself...

Maybe we started pretty small, but take a look at us now...

We're thrilled to be among LABBS' representatives for the 2025 European Barbershop Convention in Helsingborg, and the 2026 Barbershop Harmony Society International Convention in St Louis, Missouri! There's a lot to do before then, though. We've been recruiting like whirlwinds to spread the good word of barbershop to the masses, and our efforts have rewarded us with lots of passionate new members, and hopefully many more to come. Shipping that many happy singers to Sweden and the US won't be cheap, so our brilliant fundraising team are already hard at work. We have already put on three concerts since joining LABBS, including our recent Winter Jam where, in our usual style, we omitted First Noel and Away in a Manger in favour of Fleet Foxes and Ariana Grande!

But we couldn't do it alone, of course...

There's a boy who works in Starbucks, who is very inspirational...



And it's not just Taylor. We have constant inspiration, starting with our brilliant director Simon Arnott, who arranges such fantastic and innovative pieces for us to sing. We're also lucky to receive coaching from the talented and wise Rob Mance from Central Standard/Vocal Standard, and amazing West End superstar Julie Atherton. We would not be the chorus we are today without their dedication and insight, and we can't wait to work with them again in 2025.

So, onwards and upwards to Helsingborg in May. We will do our best to make everyone in LABBS proud!

**Adel Hanily, Comms Lead
London City Singers**



RED ROCK A CAPPELLA

After a five-year absence, Red Rock A Cappella took to the Convention stage last October, in the new category of 'for evaluation only'. We were all very excited and more than a little apprehensive, but we loved performing once again in front of our fellow LABBS members and had the time of our lives in Bournemouth. A particular highlight was Sunday morning's "Coaching Under Glass" with - lucky us - not just one, but two Alisons! Alison Zdzylowski and Alison Thompson. What a fantastic opportunity!

Back home in Devon there was no time to rest on our laurels, with a packed diary for the rest of the year, including performing at the Teignmouth Christmas Lights switch-on ceremony and an unexpectedly delightful sing out at Paignton Zoo. It was a beautiful, cold but sunny morning, where our audience of visitors to the zoo was supplemented by animals all around us. Most notably, two gibbons across the lake, who halted their rhythmic swing through the trees to listen to a carol or two!

By popular request, we returned to Torquay's underground Kent's Cavern - a spectacular, awe inspiring and atmospheric venue. We performed eight concerts to our enthusiastic (and well-wrapped up!) audiences who enjoyed our mix of traditional carols, much loved Christmas songs and plenty of audience participation along with a generous sprinkling of humorous jokes in the best Christmas cracker tradition!

Red Rock A Cappella is so excited to see what 2025 will bring. We have been very encouraged by the response to our New Year Open Rehearsals and look forward to welcoming new "Rockers" into our chorus, teaching them - and us - a new song or two, whilst revisiting and polishing our current repertoire in preparation for the first festival of the year in early Spring.

**Fiona Russel, Bass Music Team Leader
Red Rock A Cappella**



Wow! Wow! Wow!

What a year 2024 was for the Red Rosettes Show Chorus! Fresh from our Bronze medal winning performance in Ireland at the beginning of October, we reached the final of the Lancashire Choir of the year at the end of October. Our MD Emma McManus decided it would be a good idea to learn a new song for the competition and that we were more than capable of it, so we did. Guess what? We only went and blooming won it! We received a wonderful reception from the audience and a standing ovation for our Winner's presentation. The generosity and support from the other choruses means such a lot. We know that barbershoppers are generous in their support of each other, and we found the same spirit of generosity from the other finalists who are not familiar with barbershop. Our prize, as well as a lovely trophy, is a coaching and recording session which will take place in March. We are all looking forward to that.



Photo credit Lancashire Evening Post

It was hard to come down to earth after that but Christmas Concerts were in full swing by then and we enjoyed a wonderful night as guests of the Leyland Brass Band. We were approached by the BBC to be part of the congregation for the Christmas edition of Songs of Praise, in the beautiful church of St Andrews in Croston. Quite a number of our "Angelic" faces were on display. Aled Jones was charming and professional, and we were treated to a wonderful performance from Katherine Jenkins and also the winning BBC Choristers of the year. To our surprise and delight we received a call from Russell Watson's team asking if we would perform with him again on his Magnificent Buildings tour. We had accompanied him in March at Blackburn Cathedral and this time it was in the truly magnificent Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool. What an opportunity! Despite once again having very short notice, we revised the Italian and Latin songs we had learned in March and had to learn harmonies and descants for a number of Christmas carols. During the sound check Russell asked

about us singing the descant for "Oh Come all ye Faithful". Although we are all familiar with this carol, his team had not provided us with music but we all agreed we could pull it off and my word we did! The sound echoing around that amazing space when we hit those high notes was spine tingling! We were also allowed to sing three songs of our own so you can imagine how honoured we felt, and the audience were very generous in their applause.

So now we enter 2025 with high hopes and renewed confidence. Emma had faith in us and made us all raise our game. We have tried to warn our 11 Newbies that not every year is like this one, but who knows!

Life's a song. We sing it!

**Ann Atkin, Bass
Red Rosettes**



Victory for the Red Rosettes, photo credit Lancashire Evening Post

Silver Lining's 25th Anniversary Year

This year we celebrate our 25th anniversary and we have lots of exciting things planned. The first event of the year is always our annual dinner, giving us a chance to get together and banish the winter blues with a night of singing, eating and maybe a drink or two! This year we had partners and friends join us for an extra special night and our event team surprised us with table entertainment and a photobooth, which added to the fun. We have awards for membership anniversaries and there are still four

founder members in our midst which is fantastic. Pat, Sara, Karen and Judith provide such knowledge and experience to us it would be hard to imagine Silver Lining without them. Thank you ladies, you are amazing.

We also crown our 'Barbershopper of the Year'. This year the BOTY went to Mereta Brown who has not only joined the vocal warm up team where she taxes us with new warm up challenges but has also re-invigorated the home sings. These are hosted by members during the day or in the evening and are just great for a chat and a sing and to practice those bits of the repertoire that need extra focus.

The AGM is a time for change and Silver Lining are so pleased that we have people happy to jump in and get involved. We have three new members of the committee, bringing new thoughts, ideas and suggestions to the team that keep the chorus going. The Music Team have been working hard in getting our new repertoire songs ready and are looking forward to some help from coaches and our very own Shawwna Pomeroy, who does a great job of getting us performance ready.

**Heather Morton, PRO
Silver Lining**



Our '25 and Fabulous' Events Team, Janice, Carole, Caroline and Pat, with our Chairlady Jacqui



Mereta Brown having her BOTY award presented by our outgoing BOTY Jo Lea



*Silver Lining's 25 Years
31.01.2025
mastersofthephoto booth.co.uk*

Sara Jackson and Shawwna Pomeroy having fun in the photobooth

Voices in Motion: Six Town Sound's Plans for 2025

As 2024 wrapped up with a blaze of excitement, 2025 has kicked off with a bang! We're thrilled to announce that this April, Six Town Sound will be heading to Spain to compete at the Barbershop of Iberia Association (BIBA) Convention. A huge milestone for us, and one we've been eagerly anticipating. The energy and excitement are contagious as we look forward to reconnecting with friends from across the barbershop world. Not only will we be competing, but we'll also be soaking up the sun, sea, and sangria – all while sharing our passion for singing! We've also started the year with a major boost thanks to the incredible musical genius that is the one and only Rasmus Krigstrom! He joined us at our first rehearsal of the year, helping us secure our new competition piece and sharing his wealth of musical knowledge. His guidance has been invaluable as we continue to refine our performance. Looking further ahead, we're already buzzing about our retreat this September at the stunning Ingestre Hall. We're over the moon to be sharing this beautiful venue with our wonderful friends at Second City Sound. The opportunity to have a weekend rehearsal in such an incredible setting, while still giving each chorus the space we need, was one we

just couldn't pass up. We're working hard with our buddies at Second City to make this weekend a truly unforgettable experience that no one will want to miss! And then, the pinnacle event for 2025, we're incredibly excited to be taking to the national stage once again, this time at Harrogate in October. It's an event we've all been looking forward to, and we can't wait to experience this wonderful convention once more. We're also hopeful we'll be bringing some new members along for the ride, continuing to grow and share the joy of barbershop with even more voices! We're deep in the midst of organizing this incredible trip to BIBA, and our dedicated committee is working tirelessly behind the scenes to make it all come together. Of course, a new competition means new songs, and we're beyond excited to debut a fresh piece on the competition stage. We can't wait to share it with all of you and hope you'll be as excited as we are to hear it in person! Here's to an unforgettable year full of music, fun, and unforgettable moments. See you at BIBA!

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



Ingestre Hall



Six Town Sound with coach Rasmus Krigstrom

A Spinnaker Christmas

November 2024 saw the return of Spinnaker Chorus's Advent Acappella programme. As we rehearsed and refreshed our set of Christmas songs, we welcomed a group of new ladies who came to try barbershop, many for the first time. They learned five songs over five weeks and did a fabulous job, with seventeen singers completing the course. As well as singing, they were invited to join in with tea and cake each week, and get to know the whole Spinnaker family. Following their attendance at rehearsals, our newcomers

were invited to join us for a Christmas concert, which was enjoyed by an audience of friends and family. We had some lovely feedback, with one participant saying: 'It's been a real confidence boost', and 'I can't thank you all enough for introducing me to singing'. We are delighted that several ladies have come back to us in January and are now auditioning to become fully-fledged Spinnakerettes!

**Liz Joiner, Baritone
Spinnaker Chorus**



Advent acappella rehearsal



Spinnaker chorus, featuring the Advent Acappella participants with their certificates

Rounding off a great year

We had three stand-out events

over the Christmas period. First up was a performance in the rainbow-lit Cellarium of Fountains Abbey, near Ripon. This is a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage site where the ruins of a large Cistercian abbey loom over a formal parkland known as Studley Royal. It was a real privilege to be able to entertain visitors with some Christmas songs in such a great setting. This year was special in that the temperature actually reached double figures on the day!

Our 'Starlight Singing' concert at St Andrews Church in Roundhay, Leeds was also memorable. We shared the bill with RoCo (an AmDram group who rehearse at the church) and our very own kazoo-toting quartet, Rooftop Social Club. The acoustics in the church are fabulous and we were there at the very start of their Christmas Tree festival, so the setting really put us in the mood for our holiday season.

We rounded the year off with our Christmas Fuddle (that's Yorkshire for a 'pot-luck' or 'bring a dish' buffet) - an evening of sketches and songs, and a Machiavellian Secret Santa game that involved swapping and stealing gifts according to randomly selected instructions. Don't ask! It was brutal, but if you can't forgive your riser-mates at Christmas-time for robbing you of a gift you never knew you wanted and cost 'less than a fiver', when can you?

2025 brings some new songs that we're very excited about and, like many other choruses, we are recruiting in earnest and running a Love to Sing course. That will start on March



Sally McLean with singout first-timers Romy, Georgie and Charlotte

26th. We will also be opening up some of our rehearsals to all-comers too, and this is something we're planning to do from now until October on the first Wednesday of each month. So, if you're in the area please drop in, we'd love to see you. You will be able to join in if you wish, or just watch if you prefer, and friends and family are welcome to come along too - there'll be cake enough for everybody! Wishing everyone a fantastic year. Sing up a storm!

**Jean Lewis, PRO
White Rosettes**



Rooftop Social Club having fun at the Fuddle

Polly Witty

7th November 1931 – 1st December 2024

Polly was born in Leeds, Yorkshire in 1931, and was a very proud Yorkshire woman. During the war, Polly went to live with her paternal grandparents, and other family members on a farm in Thorer. As she grew older life revolved around sport and other activities where she had many friends. In 1952 she married Mick, and they settled down to married life in Leeds. In the mid-1960s Mick's job necessitated a move to Southampton in Hampshire, where Polly became training advisor within the construction industry, helping youngsters gain apprenticeships. Polly was widowed when Mick died in 1996, and although they never had children, Polly had a lifelong love of helping youngsters reach their potential. It was in Hampshire that Mick first discovered Barbershop and then Polly followed suit by joining Lakeside Harmony in 1981, singing songs like, "Down by the Riverside" and "I'm All Alone". Polly always gave 100% to anything she took on and became a member of the chorus committee as Secretary, and also LABBS representative. As choruses disbanded, merged or changed over the years, Polly became a member of Pitchpipers, Harbour Lights, and finally Cascade where she became a lifetime member when she felt unable to sing anymore. Following her retirement from singing she became the 'tea-lady' for Cascade for a number of years, and also became chief supporter of the chorus.

Following on from her committee work within the choruses, Polly also became Secretary to the main LABBS committee where she served for a number of years. Finally, she joined the LABBS Convention team as coordinator in charge of booking accommodation for the judges and LABBS guests and was a great supporter of the LABBS Youth programme. Polly was a lady who knew what she liked and didn't like and was admired for her straightforwardness. Always prepared for that eventuality too, in her handbag she carried all the little things that we wish we'd thought of, like little packs of sugar, salt, pepper and the like! Not forgetting that safety pin to save embarrassing moments! Polly said many times that she had a good and varied life and was lucky to have had two good men in it, her husband Mick and later Ray, with whom she shared several cruises. Her travels took her to Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South America and the USA. She had numerous friends from Barbershop, Bowls, the Yorkshire Society and the wine circle plus her charity work. Her funeral, a celebration of her life, took place in January 2025.

**Cynthia Clue and Janet Wilson
Cascade**



Polly Witty

Parents really do know best...

We were all shocked when Caroline Bamford, our Assistant MD and Tenor Queen, received her 35 Years Award and just had to find out more about how she found barbershop. This is what she said:

"I can't believe that I have been a member of the Ladies Association of British Barbershop singers for 35 years but then again I have been around barbershop my whole life! Both Mum and Dad (Bob and Eve Weall) were founder members of Blackpool Soundwaves, and Dad was their Musical Director for many years. I loved hearing the voices of my parents and their friends making joyful music together and joined Soundwaves too, only leaving when I went to the University of Bristol.

Barbershop came with me though and I joined the Avonbelles (now Avon Harmony) and sang with them during term times. When I moved to Bristol permanently in the late 1990s, I rejoined the Avonbelles eventually becoming their assistant

MD and then their MD for a number of years. The birth of my lovely children meant I had a break away from singing, but thanks to Club at Large I was able to keep up with the barbershop world and when the time was right I returned to singing and joined Bristol Fashion Chorus and have so much pleasure as their assistant MD.

My joy for the art form has never wavered and I love adding my voice to the harmonies around me. I have also been so proud to gain a quartet Bronze medal with my gorgeous Sonic girls.

I never dreamed, 35 years ago, that I would be in this position. All I can say is thanks Mum and Dad for introducing me to this joyful way of life xxx"

What a wonderful story and thanks also to Bob and Eve for the super photos.

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



Caroline (far right) and the Blackpool Soundwaves



Shear harmony

THE nearest most women get to a barber is commanding their sons, "Get your hair cut."

The very male domain of barbershop singing, however, has been invaded by women, Nellie Deans in the flesh, so forget moustachioed macho-men with hair parted down the centre, harmonising to perfection with white towels draped over one arm.

Instead think satin and bows, long skirts and soft voices.

Barbershop singing started in the States at the turn of the century and came to this country in the 1960s — but it was still an all-male preserve.

Wives got in on the act in London in 1976, started six small groups — and the Ladies Association of the British Barbershop Singers.

The Sound Waves is the well-chosen name for the Blackpool Ladies Barbershop Harmony Chorus which rehearses every Tuesday evening at Raikes Parade Methodist Church choir vestry.

Bob Weall, who teaches history at the Knowle High School, South Shore, is their musical director.

"I was a member of the men's club for some years and then I was asked if I could start a chorus for the ladies. I think they felt a bit like golfing



Caroline pictured with Dad, Bob Weall

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Congratulations to Grace Morrison, a member of Junction 14 Ladies A Cappella and a member of LABBS for 40 years.

Junction 14 presented Grace with her LABBS 40-Year Long Service Award at a New Year social dinner in January. Congratulations Grace, a great achievement. Grace's membership of LABBS started in 1985 when she was a founder member of Capital Connection. They attended the 10th LABBS convention in Blackpool but did not compete. They did however compete the following year and came 7th. Whilst with Capital Connection Grace won silver and gold medals at conventions, performed in Holland, and also sang at the BABS convention in 1990.

Grace left Capital Connection in 1990 and in 1991 she joined Chiltern Harmony Chorus (which is now Amersham A Cappella). Again, with Chiltern Harmony Chorus, Grace won silver and gold medals at LABBS conventions and sang in Holland at their convention show in 1995. They were invited to sing in Ohio for the Buckeye Invitational and also took part in the Sainsbury's Choir of the Year Competition at Buxton in 1996 and won the Single Voice Choir category. This was recorded and shown on the BBC in 1997. Grace competed at the 1998 LABBS convention for the last time with Chiltern Harmony, even doing several high kicks as part of their choreography! Grace had then moved to Milton Keynes and decided to join a more local chorus which she has now been with for 26 years. That chorus is Junction 14 Ladies A Cappella, and we are lucky to have her.

What a journey Grace. Well done.



Serena, Junction 14 Membership Secretary, presenting Grace with her 40-Year Long Service Award

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**



Serena, Junction 14 Membership Secretary, presenting badges to Christine Milner, Sheila Carter, Grace Morrison, Dorothy Moore and Debbie Teague for membership of Junction 14 of 25 years or more. Marion George also received a badge at a later date

Sandra Lea-Riley

Wow, what a journey - 40 years, who would have thought!

Barbershop has been the heartbeat of my life for so long and for good reason - it has given me:

- Experiences I would never have had
- Camaraderie
- The joy of singing in harmony
- New skills
- Choreography and creativity
- The adrenaline of competition
- Constant learning
- Endless fun and laughter
- Challenges that pushed me beyond my limits
- Outrageously fun outfits
- And lifelong friendships, both in the UK and across the globe.

It's also given me the opportunity to use my skills as a:

- Teacher
- Choreographer
- Coach
- Singer
- Judge
- Section Leader
- Emcee
- Comedian
- Motivator and Friend...

The beauty of Barbershop is that it's a great equaliser—no matter your age, nationality, gender, or profession, you're welcomed for exactly who you are.

Here's to many more years of harmony, friendship and unforgettable moments!

**Sandra xx
40 year member!**



Sandra with the Liberty Bells in the late 1980s. First on the left in the back row of three



Sandra with her chorus, Heartbeat, receiving her award from Nancy Kelsall, LABBS Singing Judge and MD of Heartbeat

Chorus Iceni

Celebrating 30 Years of LABBS Membership – Maxine Udale

Maxine joined Chorus Iceni (known as Colne Harmony at the time) in 1992. In her time with the chorus, she has been our Musical Director, Deputy Musical Director, and Bass Section Leader. She has been an invaluable member of the chorus and is still inspiring fellow chorus members today.

She retired from the chorus in Jan 2021 after achieving an exemplary 29 years

Celebrating 30 Years of LABBS Membership – Gaynor Schofield

Gaynor Schofield has been a member of a wide range of choruses and quartets over the last 30 years. In 1987, after seeing and hearing a women's quartet on TV, she joined her first barbershop group, Velvet Harmony, as a singer. Her background had been steeped in choral tradition but she found the barbershop harmonies absolutely compelling.

In 1991, she took on her first directing role at Velvet Harmony. Then in 1999, Gaynor took on a new chorus, Green Street Blues, and was delighted to win a clutch of LABBS medals with them.

In 2009, she started a Sweet Adelines group called Viva Acappella and was able to fulfil her dream of taking a chorus to International contest competing in Hawaii, Las Vegas and New Orleans. She also had a stint as the Chorus Director of a BABS men's chorus, The VIP's.

Gaynor has also competed with a number of quartets: Reminiscence; Riot; The Late Show; Dolce Vita; Weird Sisters.

but then re-joined in June 2024 for the Bournemouth Convention. Great news for us! Maxine decided to stay and is still with us today as an amazing bass.

Maxine was part of the quartet Mirage (Hazel Green, Helen Owen, Maxine Udale & Sue Allies). Helen was later replaced by Liz Garnett who went on to become an extremely popular arranger, judge and coach. Maxine was also part of the quartet Quizzical (Formerly 'HappyDaze' & FourTaste') and has also been involved with Stella Acapella.



Maxine Directing Chorus Iceni in 2017 at LABBS' Convention



Maxine and Gaynor

Gaynor has won LABBS gold medals in quartet too! The first in 1998 with Sounds Familiar (Gaynor, Jenny Green, Cathy Davies & Jean Rigby), and then again with Hot Note in 2014 (Gaynor, Rowena Phillips, Christine Avis & Colette Coull). Gaynor currently sings tenor with Simply Stellar alongside Helen Wheatly, Shelley Clempson and Debbie Clarke.

Gaynor also directs two choruses. On Mondays she directs Chorus Iceni, based in Colchester. The chorus, under Gaynor's fabulous direction, were delighted to achieve eighth place at LABBS' Convention in Bournemouth in 2024 - their highest position and score to date. Although competition

work is an important focus, Gaynor is keen to ensure all repertoire songs are performed to the same level so that every audience is treated to the very best singing. Performing popular repertoire songs to local people is at the very heart of what she does.

On a Wednesday Gaynor directs Stellar Acapella, a women's close harmony choir in Ipswich, who perform at a wide range of events all around Suffolk.

Gaynor is also an active chorus and quartet coach in the three British barbershop associations, and collaborates one-to-one with individuals too.

Gaynor is married to Brian Schofield who sings lead in a number of quartets and is a six times quartet Gold Medal Quartet Champion. This includes 2017 BABS Champion Quartet Portobello Road and 2018 BABS senior champions One Foot in the Stave. Brian is also the winner of the only International Gold medal with One Foot in the Stave. So, they really are a true Barbershop Family!

Huge congratulations to both Maxine and Gaynor on fabulous contributions to the world of barbershop and a cappella singing!!



Maxine Directing Chorus Iceni in 2017 at LABBS' Convention

Sue Ashmore, Membership Officer Chorus Iceni

Singing together

You will be doing a lot of that in your rehearsals and performances, but I'm talking about a different kind of harmonising.

Two years ago, the government started consulting on 'Protect Duty', a new law responding to failings around the Manchester Arena bombing. That led to a draft bill (dubbed Martyn's Law, after one of the victims, lobbied for by his mother) which went to Parliament's Home Office Select Committee for further consultation in 2023. It received a lot of feedback about potential unintentional consequences, including from many Making Music members, so there was a further consultation by the Home Office in January 2024. Now the [amended bill](#) is in Parliament, where there have been further stages at which evidence could be submitted. It is currently at the committee stage of the House of Lords, where the detail gets discussed and potential amendments put forward.

I am taking you through this process because it shows the many opportunities built into the legislative process for us citizens to input our view. But you need to know it's happening, and that it's also not always easy to give feedback. Forms and information can be dense and need some interpreting.

But this is a job Making Music can do for you – keeping an eye out for consultations and upcoming legislation and working out where and how you can respond, making sure that where relevant and appropriate you are able to make your contribution.

In the case of this bill, the amended version is hugely



improved for our sector, so the hard work from Making Music and member groups paid off, although we had to wait two years to find out whether it had.

So, this is one long shout-out for us all sticking together. We may be small individually, but as part of Making Music's 4,000 groups, we can pack a punch.

As in singing, there is value in coordinating our voices!

Current campaigns you may wish to contribute to:

Ask your MP to lobby for creative tax relief for choirs in the Spring Spending Review (ideally by mid-February) – [more info](#).

**Barbara Eifler, CEO
Making Music**

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For just £15, you'll get a fun-packed day with us, including section time with your part from CCC, chorus coaching with the fabulous Joanne Braham, and the chance to sing on the risers in an end-of-day performance.

Once registered, you'll receive tracks and music for a brand-new song so you can get a head start before the big day. Keep your eyes peeled on social media for further information on how to sign up. We can't wait to keep the music going and share even more incredible moments with you. Thank you for your continued support – you make everything we do possible! See you soon and happy singing!

www.CheshireChord.co.uk