

British Association
of
Barbershop Singers

25 Years
The History of
British Barbershop
Harmony

Alan Johnson & Harry Wells



1974 to 1999

25 Years

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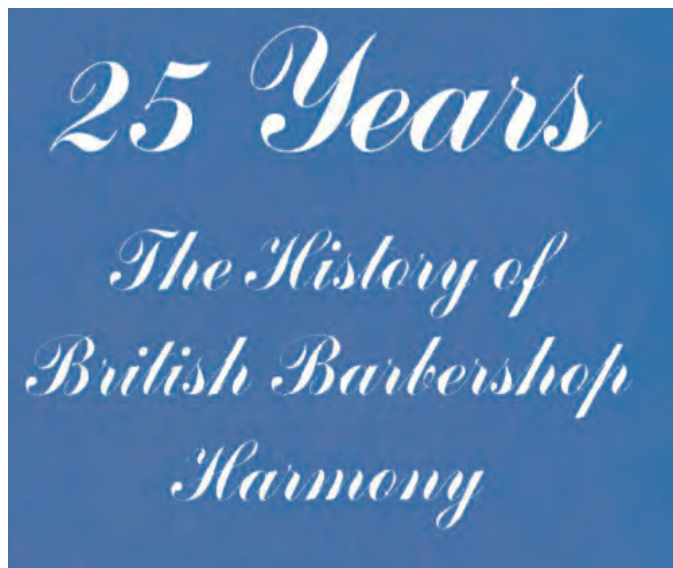
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Published by British Association of Barbershop Singers
Registered Office: 2 Stokenchurch Place, Bradwell Common,
Milton Keynes, England. MK13 8AW

Printed in England by G.W.Belton Ltd
Heaton Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, England

Front and Back Covers designed by David Brown,
Broughton, North Lincolnshire, England



Online Version

Published 2018

This book has been scanned from the original book and some pages may be misaligned in the process.

Preparing for our 50th Anniversary

In preparation for our 50th Anniversary in 2024, the BABS Board decided to re-publish the 25th Anniversary book produced in 2003 by Alan Johnson & Harry Wells. The Board sincerely thanks Alan & Harry for their gracious granting of permission to re-publish their work.

As this book was produced over 15 years ago, and concerns subject matter dating from 1974, there may be some inaccuracies. If you spot anything, please send an email to: getinvolved@singbarbershop.com for the information of other readers and to hopefully start a discussion.

Finally, the Board is fully committed to the documentation of the second 25 years of BABS history (1999 – 2024). Watch this space!

Corrections to the original book

Alan Johnson has asked us to highlight some corrections that need to be made:

On the first page of Chapter one - headed "The Danser Family", in paragraph 3, "A Momentous Year", I stated "In 1958, Bessie, Harry and Tony, while on a trip to visit relatives in the USA" and the error was - it wasn't Tony with Bessie & Harry, it was their other son John Danser who was with them. I was corrected, of course by John and he told me that at that time his brother Tony could not accompany them because he was doing his National service in the RAF at that time.

The other error was on page 87 - where I listed the BABS Clubs, together with their date of Registration and the dates of the formation of the Founding Clubs. Unfortunately, I slipped up and left out one of the clubs! My error was pointed out to me very forcefully by a member of that Club, but unfortunately, and sadly, I have forgotten which club was omitted.

Dedications

This book is dedicated to all lovers of Barbershop Harmony and as a tribute to the memory of seven men - Harry, Don, Ian, Martin, Steve, Dave and Earl.

Harry Danser was the founder of *Crawley Barbershop Harmony Club*, the first barbershop club in Great Britain and was also the first President of the British Association of Barbershop Singers.

Don Amos was the first Chairman of the Association and was elected Honorary Life President of the Association in 1979.

The words dedication and love of barbershop harmony epitomised the lives of Harry, Don, Ian Stone, Martin Hill and Steve Hall each in their own way.

Dave Stevens and Earl Moon were both icons of the American Barbershop Society. I first met Dave Stevens in 1976 when he directed a Society chorus touring the U.K. Then again, when as Society Educator at the BABS Harmony College, he gave an inspiring talk, based on his Society presentation entitled *What Are We Trying to Preserve?* later reproduced on video, a presentation I believe every barbershop singer should see.

I met Earl Moon when I attended his classes on Woodshedding and Tag-Singing on each of my three attendances at the Society Harmony Colleges in the early '90s. Like Dave Stevens, Earl was a prolific barbershop song arranger and wherever he went his devotion to barbershop harmony and especially woodshedding and tag-singing drew all like-minded barbershop singers to him. Although slight in physical stature, he was a giant in barbershop talent as a songwriter, arranger and in his infectious enthusiasm and love of barbershop chords.

Alan Johnson

Acknowledgments

This book could not have been produced without the help of a number of members of the British Association of Barbershop Singers (BABS), the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singers in America (SPEBSQSA), Society of Nordic Barbershop Singers (SNOBS) and the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers (LABBS), who have supplied a whole range of information, archive material and photographs.

We are indebted to:

Harry Ambler, Don Amos, Martin Anderson, George Badland, Bunny Bainbridge (LABBS), Mick Barnacle, Henry Bell, Barrie Best, John Danser, Bernard Davis, Roy and Pat Dawson, Gunnar Ericsson (SNOBS), Kate Firth, Nick Frampton, Jonathan Hershman, Val Hicks, Janine Hill, Tony Hill, Gerry Holland, Trevor James, Bob Johnson (Hon. Member - BABS), Dan Jordan, Eddie Kidby, Mel Knight (Hon. Member - BABS), Dale Kynaston, Kevan Liebling, Joe Liles (Hon. Member - BABS), Mike Lofthouse, Brian Lynch (SPEBSQSA), Phil Mobsby, Barry Nowell, Chuck Odom, John Odom, Chas Owen, Rob Pond, Michael Potts, Pete Powell, Gina Radandt (SPEBSQSA), Jim Ramsey, Paul Sherry, George Shields (Hon. Member - BABS), Julie Siepler (SPEBSQSA), Jonathan Smith, Brian Sperry, Gary Stamm (SPEBSQSA), Graham Starkie, Renee Stone, Tony Syrett, Mike Taylor, Derek Thomas, Pete Tinker, Bob Walker, Eve Weall (LABBS), Laurie Whittle, John Wiggins, Ron Willis, Joan and Bob Witherington and Frank Withey.

Photographs:

Our grateful thanks to everyone who has supplied photographs for inclusion in the book and to copyright holders for permission to print quartet and chorus photographs by the following Official Convention photographers:

Derek Hemsley (1984), Roger Williams (1986), Derek Botherel (1989), Quentin Rees - Torquay (1991, -92, -93, -94, -95, -96, -97, -98, -99).

Also our thanks for permission to print the following photographs:

Fortunairs –Crawley Observer, On Spec –Michael Stockton Studios, Curtain Call – Studio 81 Darlington, Vocal Gentry –Selwyn Green, Cambridge Blues –Focal Point Studios, Take Note –Torquil MacLeod, Struptaget –Gunnar Ericsson, Phabulous Phoenicians Chorus –courtesy Miller Photography.

Archive Material Sources:

Minutes of Association Council, Executive, Music Committee and Guild of Judges Meetings. Association publications: *News Sheet* and *Harmony Express*, editors Fred Williams, Vic Nield, Martin Anderson, Colin Graham, Barry Nowell, Paul Sherry; Convention Souvenir Programmes, editors including Dudley Jones, Mick Barnacle, Barry Nowell, John Wilkinson, Den Tyrrell, Harry Wells; Association Annual Directories, early Club Bulletins *Harmony Grapevine* (Crawley BHC) editor John Jones, *Singin' Hinnie* (Tyneside BHC) editor David Logan Wood, *Sound Wave* (Brighton & Hove BHC) editor Syd Clarke, *Tag Rag* (Reading BHC) editor John Wiggins, *The Crawley Chordsmen –The First Eighteen Years –4th November 1964 – 4th November 1982* by Jonathan Hershman.

Special thanks are due to Darryl Flinn, Executive Director SPEBSQSA, for granting permission to quote from any Society publications, in particular *Harmony Heritage* - editor Dr. Val Hicks and various editions of *Harmonizer* from the 1970's and 1980's.

Two people deserve a special mention; Harry's wife Pam Wells for all the work she has done at various stages of the work on this book, including painstaking proof-reading, preparing the index and casting a watchful eye over the chapters to help us guard against repetition in the text. Also, my long-suffering wife, May, for her tolerance during the build up of archive material for the book over several years, resulting in the loss of a pleasant lounge, which has been replaced by an untidy computer workroom cum office, not to mention a storeroom of barbershop memorabilia.

We have done everything possible to check the material and apologise for any omissions or errors. Similarly, we have made every effort to obtain permission where material subject to copyright has been used and we apologise for any shortcomings in this respect.

List of Photographs

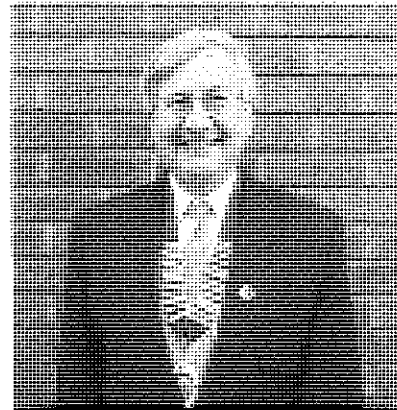
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Introduction

It is the ultimate privilege to be invited to contribute to this book, which chronicles the establishment and development of our wonderful hobby within the United Kingdom. Starting with the acknowledgement of Harry Danser's one-man missionary zeal, which was to share the inspiration he drew from vocal harmony with as many like-minded countrymen as he could recruit, the book gives recognition to those who nurtured his dream into the flourishing national organisation that we have today.



The timing of its publication is admirable, as it looks back at the activities and personalities of the Association while many of the stalwarts of its early years are still with us to receive the acknowledgement they deserve. In our mission to preserve our style of music, it is fitting that we record our history in this early part of a new millennium, as a 'baton' to hand to those whom we entrust to ensure its survival.

Like many members of our Association we are indebted to Alan Johnson and Harry Wells for the considerable time and effort they have put into researching and compiling all the information needed for the publishing of this fascinating document. It is a book that members will treasure: an appropriate record to hand-on to posterity.

Wilf Pattison
Chairman
British Association of Barbershop Singers
2003

Preface

There is an old saying 'Tall oaks from little acorns grow'. Nothing has ever been nearer the truth than this phrase applied to our Association.

We started with nothing, except a desire to spread the word of our wonderful barbershop harmony and the joy that it can bring, not just to us but also to those to whom we sing.

When you read this book, you will be able to judge the transition we have made in the twenty-five years since the 'First National Gathering' in Crawley in May 1973. At the 'Gathering' the representatives from just four clubs issued a 'Statement of Intent' and this created a follow up meeting in a hotel near Heathrow in February 1974 to ratify the set of draft rules that had been prepared. Little did the nine men who sat down at that meeting think that BABS would become the largest barbershop singing organisation in Europe with a membership that has contacts and friends all over the world.

I well remember our second meeting when the Treasurer gave his report that we had just £13 in the bank. A little acorn indeed, but we survived.

I wish to pay tribute here to all of those men, too many to name individually, who have been with us all along the road, because the success we have achieved would not have been possible without their dedication. They gave of their time, effort and expertise freely and willingly. Please accept my grateful thanks.

Tribute must be paid also to the support of many people in America and Canada for the help and assistance they have given us, particularly in our early days, when we were trying to get things moving. Some of the relationships created are treasured personally, for I am aware that without their help we could not have built so strong an Association.

May we continue along the path we have set ourselves; to bring our fraternity of peace and harmony to enrich many other people wherever they may live.
Harmoniously, as ever,

Don Amos
Honorary Life President
2002

A Message from Joe Liles

My life has been greatly enriched by a long-time involvement with BABS. It all started with my first trip to England in 1981. In September of that year I spent two weeks travelling countrywide, visiting clubs, working and singing with wonderful barbershoppers.

I was immediately impressed with the talented singers and the outstanding musical leadership within the BABS organization. The glowing stories I had heard were really true! One wild-and-crazy experience I'll never forget was being enlisted into the *Thursdayaires* at Harmony College. I was put on the front row and what little dignity I had was soon stripped from me. I have to admit, it sure was fun to be 'had'. I love the English sense of humour.

Staying in a different home each night presented wonderful opportunities to meet and visit with marvellous families and individuals. Many of them have become life-long friends. I did learn, however, that certain innocent words and phrases used back home meant something entirely different in the 'real' English language and are forbidden in mixed company. I think it was Winston Churchill who said, 'We are separated by a common language'. Now I know what he meant.

If it were not for the imaginative leadership of many people we would not have AAMBS, BABS, BinG!, DABS, IABS, NZABS, SPEBSQSA, SNOBS and SPATS or the female organizations including LABBS, Harmony Inc. and Sweet Adelines International. This, my friends, forms an amazing treasure chest of fellowship and harmony making. How much richer our lives are because of this network of thousands.

We pay tribute to those who have gone before us and for those, both present and future, who will lead us into expanding this most harmonious association. All of us should feel a part of the history. We have each added a voice in keeping vocal music and harmony alive, particularly in the barbershop style. In the truest sense, barbershop is harmony.

Kay and I have missed few BABS conventions since the mid 1980's. They are fun-filled gatherings of barbershoppers from all over the world. The contests and shows are so enjoyable. One of my special pleasures has been the directing of a number of massed sings on that fabulous weekend. The sight of the sea of smiling faces is printed indelibly in my mind and the sound of the vast array of voices just keeps resounding in my head.

New memories are made with each visit to a BABS convention. And to revisit with friends who make the long trip to SPEBSQSA conventions is an annual joy, to be sure.

Thank you, BABS, for your remarkable leadership in all-things-barbershop. As this celebrated style of harmony continues to evolve, we are building an ever-growing repertoire of songs and arrangements from the late 1800's to the present day. What a heritage we have. What an abundantly smashing future spreads ahead and beyond us. It must give every BABS member a sense of fulfilment in knowing you are a part of this magnificent, magical road to musical pleasure and accomplishment. My heart and Kay's join you in this and future celebrations.

January 2002

Origins of Barbershop Harmony Singing

(With extracts from *Heritage of Harmony* edited by Val Hicks)

Why Barbershop?

No one knows for sure when, where or how barbershop singing started. However, there are references in literature that give us some clues.

Thomas Morley (1567-1602) claimed 'You keep not time...you sing you know not what. It would seem you came lately from a barber's shop'.

Samuel Pepys (1633-1702) wrote 'After supper my Lord called for the lieutenant's cittern and with two candlesticks with money in them for symballs we made barber's music'.

According to William Andrews, in his book *At the Sign of the Barber's Pole*, 'His shop was the gathering place for the idle gallants ...the cittern or guitar lay on the counter and this was played by a customer to pass the time away until his turn came to have his beard starched or his mustachios curled'.

There are many such references to barbershop singing. It seems that while waiting their turn for a shave or haircut, customers would often strum on a lute or cittern - and sing. We have no idea what they sang but there are references to barbers singing 'in fours'.

Singing in barbershops died out in this country when barbers diversified their services and took up dentistry - pulling teeth. They also did a bit of blood letting, considered a cure for some diseases. Presumably the sight of blood was not conducive to singing.

The custom of singing in barbers' shops crossed the Atlantic with the wave of European emigrants, though in America the guitar replaced the cittern. In the mid-Western states of nineteenth century America, in the absence of clubs for men in small towns, the barber's shop became the gathering place for men to pass the time of day. Someone would strike up a tune, maybe the barber himself, and customers would join in harmonising to the melody. Often a guitar would be hanging from the wall for anyone, possibly the barber, to strum a few chords. This type of self-entertainment spread and became popular parlour music with the family.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, this style was called *kerbstone harmony* or *lamp-post harmony*. However, in 1911 there was a popular song with the words 'Mister Jefferson Lord, play that Barbershop Chord'. The term barbershop caught on and has been widely used ever since.

This is the popular theory of the origins of barbershop harmony singing but there are at least four other areas of influence in addition to this classic theory. These are the minstrel show, black singers, the *soh to soh* song and the early recording quartets.

Minstrel Shows

Minstrel shows were very popular in America in the 1840's and 1850's and traditionally four men would step forward from the troupe to be introduced very eloquently by the interlocutor and sing a popular ballad of the day. These first minstrel foursomes were casually organised, with no special costumes, names or managers. They were just four men who could blend their voices. At about this time the tradition of minstrel quartets was very popular and individual quartets soon became famous when they went on show tours.

Black Singers

The slaves on southern plantations sang to make their lives more bearable and to give vent to their feelings and moods. Their vocal harmonies were *ear* harmonies, as printed music was never used. After emancipation, the freed slaves maintained this singing tradition and many could sing well in quartets. At the early part of the twentieth century, black quartets would come to Tin Pan Alley offices to plug songs and seek work.

Soh to Soh Songs

Many popular songs from 1830 to 1895 were of *doh to doh* melodic construction, that is they tended to begin and end on the low key note of the scale. This kind of song crowds the bass singer off his rightful harmony note, forcing him to sing too low for his voice range. Towards the end of the nineteenth century *soh to soh* songs arrived opening up room for the bass and top tenor to function more easily.

Musically speaking *doh to doh* type songs were usually sung in glee club style with the melody sung by the first (top) tenor. The new *soh to soh* song allowed the second tenor, or a high baritone, to present the melody, with the top tenor singing a high harmony above. The bass sang his foundation low harmony of roots and fifths with the baritone ranging above and below the melody filling in the harmonies with his fourth tone.

The development of the *soh to soh* song was the most important influence in the evolution of this vocal style, basically because they were easy for the average singer to sing and to harmonise. *Sweet Rosie O'Grady* and *My Wild Irish Rose* were typical close harmony songs of the day.

Golden Age of Barbershop

From 1900 to 1930 was the golden age of barbershop harmony songs. Hundreds of these close harmony tunes were sung by quartets and by families gathered round the parlour piano. This was an age of innocence and the songs told of mother, home, Dixie, girls, courtship and of first hellos and last goodbyes. The songs were aimed at the heart with simple homespun messages. The great Tin Pan Alley composers such as George M. Cohan, Ernest Ball, Irving Berlin and Harry Von Tilzer wrote songs by the thousand and people bought the sheet music by the million. Harry Von Tilzer is reputed to have written eight thousand songs in his career.

The Early Recordings

Thomas Edison created the recording industry in the late 1880's and early 1890's. In September 1891 the Manhasset Quartet recorded a dozen songs, the first vocal group to record.

Soon the Haydn Quartet, the Diamond Comedy Four, the American Quartet and many others were being heard on the new-fangled cylinders and wind-up gramophones. Incidentally, the microphone had not been invented and these recording quartets sang into a horn.

Barbershop Harmony in Decline

During the late 1920's, life styles changed. With the coming of the movies, dance bands and radio, the nation moved towards musical spectatorship. Song styles changed too and the new tunes were hard to harmonise. As crooning and jazz gained momentum, barbershop quartetting waned and by the early 1930's, barbershop harmony was passé

Revival - Owen C Cash and Rupert I Hall



Owen C Cash

In 1938, one man rebelled against this trend. He was the late Owen C. Cash, a tax attorney of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Cash, disgusted with the seemingly endless complications of modern life, especially as it pertained to the Federal Government, decided to fight to preserve an American tradition. He found a supporter in Rupert I. Hall, an investment man in the same city and they dictated a half-serious, half-humorous letter, which they sent to friends - and never dreamed what they were starting.

The letter read; - *In this age of dictators and government control of everything, about the only privilege guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, not in some way supervised or directed is the order of barbershop*

quartet singing. Without a doubt, we still have the right of peaceable assembly, which I am advised by competent legal authority includes quartet singing. The writers have for a long time thought that something should be done to encourage the enjoyment of this last remaining vestige of human liberty. Therefore we have decided to hold a song-fest on the roof garden of the Tulsa Club on Monday April 11th (1938) at 6.30 pm. It was signed by Rupert Hall, Keeper of the Minor Keys and Owen Cash, Third Asst Temporary Vice Chairman.

At the 'rebels' first meeting, twenty-six men attended. A week later a second meeting attracted seventy men. At the third one hundred and fifty showed up at the Alvin Hotel. In the street, a traffic jam built up outside the hotel as people listened to the singing.

A story appeared in the local paper; the wire services picked it up and in a matter of weeks chapters were springing up all over the USA; the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America was well on its way. Today over thirty five thousand men from every station in life, spread over sixteen districts of the USA and Canada sing in around seven hundred choruses and over two thousand quartets and make SPEBSQSA the largest male singing organisation in the world.



Rupert Hall

Definition of the Barbershop Style

Barbershop harmony is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords for every melody note in a predominantly homophonic texture. The melody is consistently sung by the lead, with the tenor harmonizing above the melody, the bass singing the lowest harmonizing notes and the baritone completing the chord. The melody is not sung by the tenor except for an infrequent note or two to avoid awkward voice leading, in singing tags and codas, or when some appropriate embellishing effect can be created. Occasional brief passages may be sung by fewer than four voice parts.

Barbershop music features songs with understandable lyrics and easily singable melodies. The tones clearly define a tonal centre and imply major and minor chords together with barbershop (dominant and secondary dominant) seventh chords. These resolve primarily around the circle of fifths, while making frequent use of other resolutions. Barbershop music also features a balanced and symmetrical form and a standard metre. The basic song and its harmonization are embellished by the arranger to provide support of the song's theme and to close the song effectively.

Barbershop singers adjust pitches to achieve perfectly tuned chords in just intonation while remaining true to the established tonal centre. Artistic singing in the barbershop style exhibits a fullness or expansion of sound, precise intonation, a high degree of vocal skill and a high level of unity and consistency within the ensemble. Ideally, these elements are natural, un-manufactured and free from apparent effort.

The presentation of barbershop music uses appropriate musical and visual methods to convey the theme of the song and provide the audience with an emotionally satisfying and entertaining experience. The musical and visual delivery is from the heart, believable and sensitive to the song and its arrangement throughout. The most stylistic presentation artistically melds together the musical and visual aspects to create and sustain the illusions suggested by the music.

The Code of Ethics

We shall do everything in our power to preserve the barbershop style as defined.

We shall do everything in our power to perpetuate the Association.

We shall conduct the Association's affairs in such a manner as to reflect credit upon the Association and its members.

We shall conform in all respects to the rules of the Association.

We shall accept for membership all congenial men of good character who love barbershop music.

We shall exhibit a spirit of good fellowship towards all members.

We shall refrain from forcing our songs upon unsympathetic ears.

We shall not use our membership of the Association for personal gain.

We shall not permit the introduction of political, religious or other controversial issues into the affairs of the Association.

We shall endeavour to spread the love of barbershop and its spirit of harmony throughout the world.

We shall render all possible altruistic service through the medium of barbershop harmony.

We shall ensure that no material used in a public show gives offence to any member of the audience.

The Association deprecates and does not condone in any way, the use of printed, hand-written or copied music that infringes copyright.





The Danser Family

The story begins before World War I when a young Englishman, Harry Danser, started a love affair with close harmony that was to last for the rest of his life. He would sit in music halls and listen to groups like the *Gotham Quartet* and the *Hedges Brothers and Jacobsen*. With his brother Jack and their cousins they would sing harmony at every opportunity. At one time Harry, Jack and sister Sadie sang in a harmony trio, performing in working men's clubs and at home in the parlour, after the custom of the day.

A Quartet Is Born

Between the wars, Harry started his own family of harmony singers with the essential help, of course, of his wife Bessie. Singing the melody lines to popular songs of the day was daughter Ray, while Harry would add a tenor harmony. Later their son, John, took on the tenor line leaving Harry to provide a third part, a mixture of bass and baritone. Leaving lesser mothers to generate the proverbial football team, Bessie's third offspring Tony, completed the quartet.

A Momentous Year



Harry Danser

In 1958, Bessie, Harry and Tony, while on a trip to visit relatives in the United States of America, went to see the great Robert Preston starring on Broadway in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*. This was the show that featured the legendary barbershop quartet *Buffalo Bills*.

Inspired by their performance Harry found his old itch was just as strong. In an attempt to scratch it, he and his family scoured the record shops of New York until they found what they later described as a 'veritable musical Aladdin's cave' where they bought a dozen or so records. Happily for later generations of British barbershop fans, they never tired of listening to these barbershop records.

Contact with SPEBSQSA

On his way home on the *Queen Mary*, Harry met an American barbershopper, who gave Harry a copy of the *Harmonizer*. This is the official publication of SPEBSQSA, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America.

Unable to track down any barbershop recordings in the UK, Harry wrote to the *Harmonizer* on 20 January 1960, asking to be put on their mailing list and for information on how he could

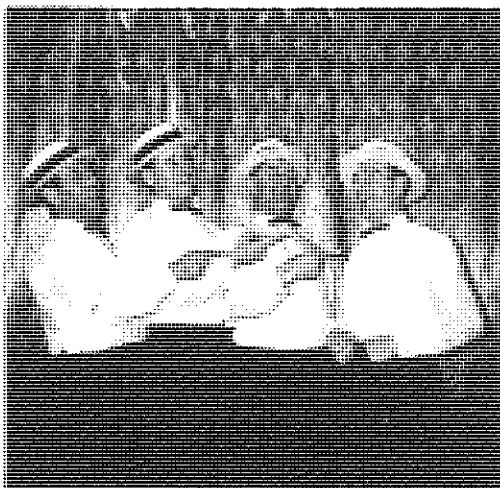
purchase more records. 'Barbershop is little known in Britain', he wrote, 'but I want to spread the gospel'.

This was probably the most significant letter written by a British barbershopper, as it was the first contact with the Society; the first bridge across the Atlantic, without which barbershop in Britain would not have been established.

First British Barbershop Quartet

In April 1960, John and Tony Danser met Bob Witherington at a local tennis club. Later that year, they met with David Steele when they gathered to listen to the Dansers' barbershop records. The same night in November 1960, the quartet *Barbershop Four* was formed.

Bob Witherington, who had previously played bass harmonica with the popular music hall group, *Morton Fraser's Harmonica Rascals*, sang bass. British barbershop was born! After a visit to the USA and Canada, Harry made contact with



*The Barbershop Four
Left to right
John Danser-tenor
David Steele-lead
Bob Witherington-bass
Tony Danser-baritone*

Canadian barbershopper, George Shields, Musical Director of East York (Toronto) Chapter, who later encouraged Harry to start the Crawley Club, following a tour of the UK with the East York Chorus.

And First British Chorus

On 4 November 1964 thirteen men gathered in the Dansers' home to form the Crawley Barbershop Club, the first in Britain. By the end of the year membership of the Crawley Club had grown to thirty, but Harry Danser had much greater ambitions; to spread barbershop harmony countrywide.

Harry's Campaign

In 1965, when Harry and some of the family attended the Society International Convention in Boston, Harry met up with Dr. Bob Johnson, the Society's Director of Music and with Barrie Best, Executive Director of the Society. From that moment, Harry started a campaign to persuade the Society officially to recognise British barbershop. He realised that if barbershop was to take off, then it would going to take men like Bob Johnson and Barrie Best to attract the necessary media coverage.

The Spread of Barbershop Harmony

On 14 March 1973, during their visit to the Crawley Club, the 1967 International Champion Quartet the *Four Statesmen* made Harry Danser an honorary member of the quartet.

Following this, on 26 May 1973 the first gathering of British barbershoppers was held in Crawley. This was the occasion when Chuck Odom of the Brighton Club presented Harry with a plaque, from SPEBSQSA and an accompanying letter from Barrie Best.

The Association of British Barbershop Harmony Clubs

The Association of British Barbershop Harmony Clubs was formed on 16 February 1974 and soon after Harry was elected as the first president, thus fulfilling the first of his dreams.

Sadly Harry died on 7 December 1976, but by then he was aware that his fervent hope for the spread of barbershop harmony throughout the UK was being realised. At that time the Association had twenty-five registered clubs and a membership of six hundred and twenty-one.

Is England Ready for Barbershop?

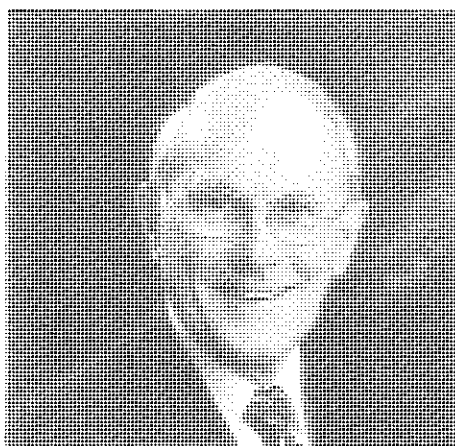


Once the Crawley Barbershop Harmony Club was up and running in November 1964, Harry Danser's aim was to spread the gospel of barbershop harmony throughout the rest of Britain. However, although the *Crawley Chordsmen* soon became well known through their singouts for audiences in their own locality, Harry's efforts to bring barbershop harmony to a wider, nationwide public met with no success.

Harry soon realised that he needed help in the shape of some input from SPEBSQSA and that local and national media would be more likely to take notice if the message was spoken with an American accent.

From 1965 onwards, Harry Danser bombarded the Society International Office with demands that the American organization recognise that barbershop harmony had a foothold in the UK but that it needed a helpful American boost to move it on.

Eventually, some five years later, on 31 August 1970, Harry Danser was delighted when Wilbur D. Sparks, International President of SPEBSQSA, wrote to inform him that, 'the Society's Executive Committee has directed Barrie Best, its Executive Director, to visit the British Isles, as soon as practicable, with a view toward establishing barbershop singing there in a formal way. It is hoped that his visit will result in the establishment of other groups in your country and perhaps the formation of an affiliated organisation there. This action by the Executive Committee has come about largely as the result of your own missionary work and of the urging by American (Canadian and US) Barbershoppers who have learned of the Crawley group and its success'.



Barrie Best

On Thursday 16 September 1971, Harry Danser and Bert Thomas from Crawley Barbershop Harmony Club, together with

Barrie's uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Thomas Clark of Reading, met Barrie Best at Heathrow Airport.

Harry and Bert briefed Barrie on the hoped-for coverage of his forthcoming tour by national newspapers, radio and television.

The Media Launch

Harry was delighted, as this would be the first time barbershop harmony had been featured on any media other than the local press. Sadly it was not to be, as the major national and London newspapers went on strike the very next day.

Undeterred by this loss of press coverage, Barrie Best planned his two and a half week tour of English cities. Somehow, he persuaded BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) to lend him office facilities, where he spent many hours arranging personal interviews at local and national radio and TV broadcasting stations throughout the country.

On some of the programmes, Barrie would use a Crawley Club quartet to demonstrate barbershop harmony; in others he actually taught studio staff to sing songs such as *My Wild Irish Rose*. He took every opportunity during the taping of programmes to publicise the meetings planned at his next port of call.

A Gruelling Schedule

Barrie Best spent the first day of his seventeen-day tour in the capital on Monday 20 September by having meetings with Thames and BBC TV and Radio. He made appearances on *London This Week* TV Show, *Home Run* radio programme, BBC Radio *Late Night Extra* and spoke at a meeting in the *Criterion* in central London.

Brighton

The following day he was interviewed on BBC Radio Brighton and also on the *Folk Music* programme. A twelve-man chorus from Crawley Club helped out at a meeting in the evening in Brighton with Chuck Odom who, later, was to found the Brighton and Hove Club.

Crawley

On Wednesday 22 September Barrie contacted Southern TV and arranged another interview. He then went on to Crawley Shopping Centre where a four man BBC TV crew filmed a Crawley Club quartet. In the evening he was at the Crawley Club with forty members and twenty-three guests. The Crawley Chorus sang a few songs, as did the *Beckford Brothers* quartet. Canadian Jim Ramsey, a Scarborough Chapter member (temporarily based in Newcastle) and Chuck Odom's brother, John, another Scarborough Chapter member were present. Later, Jim founded the Tyneside club.

In his report on the visit Barrie stated that 'the Crawley Chorus sang as well as fifty percent of the choruses in America, although the accent was somewhat different due to their English pronunciation, but it's barbershop and sung very well'.

Southampton

After taping an interview for Southern TV at Southampton on Thursday 23 September Barrie went over to Radio Solent to give a live radio interview on the *Needle Chatter* programme.

Bristol

It was on to Bristol the next day for a BBC TV interview and a singalong with three station announcers. In the evening, after a public meeting in a hotel, when only seven people attended, he was dismayed to learn that the hotel staff had turned people away, as they were unaware of the meeting. When Barrie contacted BBC Radio and TV the next day they promised to replay an interview the next morning on *Pick of the Week* and announce an apology to members of the public who had been turned away referring them to a contact in Bristol.

St. Albans

At Barrie Best's next meeting on Monday 27 September, in the Market Hall in St Albans, eight people turned up with Jim Ramsey and a photographer from the local press. Those attending had responded to the coverage in the media.

Birmingham

On Tuesday 28 September, Barrie attended a Rotary Club luncheon in Edgbaston, Birmingham and made contact with Radio Newcastle and the Liverpool Echo. Whilst in Birmingham he taped a forty-five minute programme of barbershop for a *Home James* broadcast with Radio Birmingham. A meeting was arranged in the Imperial Hotel, but no one showed up because there had been no newspaper or TV coverage and the BBC radio had produced no response.

Manchester

Barrie travelled to Manchester on Wednesday 29 September for a live BBC programme which was repeated in the evening. In a meeting with representatives of BBC Manchester, the possibility of planning a show tour the next year, in locations where potential new groups might be formed, was discussed.

Two tours did in fact did take place, both led by Barrie. A hundred-man American chorus and several top quartets accompanied him. One tour was in May 1974 and the other in May 1976. The publicity and local follow-up meetings during these tours resulted in spreading the word about barbershop singing to the public and to the formation of a number of British barbershop clubs.

Barrie took the 1970 Atlantic City Convention film to Granada TV, where he recorded an interview and taught a barbershop song to four studio announcers. At an evening meeting in Manchester, a Granada TV crew was present and they gave a plug for the meeting to be held next night in Liverpool. Twelve men showed up at the Manchester meeting and the Convention film was shown. An enthusiast, Alan Hezzlewood, talked of starting a local barbershop group. Enquiries at the meeting included requests for sources of music, records and pitchpipes.

Liverpool

Moving on to Liverpool on Thursday 30 September, Barrie taped a radio show for Radio Merseyside. He then attended a public meeting at which BBC TV and Radio Merseyside turned up. Both taped and filmed him working with a chorus and a quartet.

Newcastle upon Tyne

Flying north on Friday 1 October, Jim Ramsey met Barrie at Newcastle Airport. His session for the *BBC Northeast* programme was, according to Barrie, 'very enjoyable and probably the most productive of my entire trip'. The Friday night meeting in Newcastle was a great success, twenty-eight men showed up. Three quartets sang the song learned by the group as a chorus. That night the foundation for the Tyneside Barbershop Harmony Club was laid.

Return To London then home to USA

Thus ended Barrie Best's first tour of the UK; he returned to London on Saturday 2 October and flew back to Kenosha the next day. After his hectic three-week solo tour of England where he visited ten cities, Barrie Best answered his own query 'Is England Ready for Barbershop?' In his report in the *Harmonizer* for Nov/Dec 1971 he wrote: 'I feel strongly that the men of this country enjoy barbershop singing as much as we do, even though it is very new to them and they know very little about it. I'm confident that barbershopping can flourish in England to the same degree that it has in America. It's going to mean more pioneering but I think it would be worthwhile for the Society'.

The Society's Main Contacts

Barrie Best reported back to the Society that he felt his tour should be followed up by a show tour and include field men who would stay on after the tour to work with the new groups and help to get music programmes established. Finally he forecast that three people would be the Society's main contacts for the British people wanting to become involved in barbershop singing.



Jim Ramsey

These were Harry Danser, Bob Walker and Jim Ramsey. He added: 'All three men are most enthusiastic'.

Canadian Influences



On 6 June 1964 Harry Danser attended his first full-length barbershop show entitled *A Night in June*. In his own words, 'A night we shall always vividly remember, magnificent, not to be compared to just listening to barbershop records'.

The show, in Rochester, New York, was compered by Canadian George Shields, with whom Harry had corresponded on the subject of barbershop. George made a special announcement about the Danser family's journey of many thousands of miles from England to see the show, prompting Harry and his family to take a bow to a warm audience.

Featured on the show were the 1963 International Champions, *Town and Country Four* and the *Hometowners*. A few days later the Danser family visited the Scarborough Chapter and Harry struck up a great and lasting friendship with George Shields.



George Shields

On 13 September the same year, the Dansers and friends went to London Airport to welcome George Shields and his East York Chapter who were embarking on a three-week goodwill tour of Britain. George and a pal from the chorus, Jim Waugh, visited the Danser home where they were greeted by the *Barbershop Four* quartet with wives and friends. George coached the quartet, which no doubt helped them to polish their performance for their appearance on the final show of the East York Chapter, at the St Pancras Town Hall on 29 September 1964.

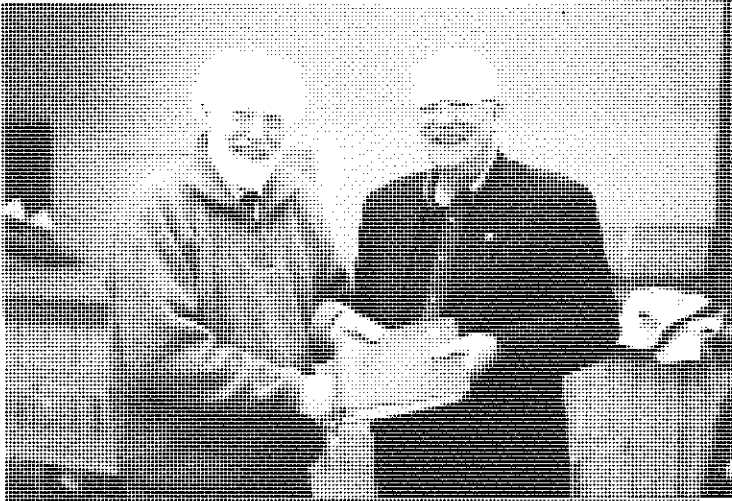
During his visit, George Shields told Harry that if his dream of a barbershop society was ever to become a reality, then now was the time to start a chorus. Writing to Kenosha later, Harry expressed his gratitude to George Shields for the valuable guidance and advice that had enabled them to start a club in Crawley.

Barrie Best

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Barrie Best, Executive Director of SPEBSQSA, from 1963 until 1977, visited Britain in 1971 for a three-week tour. In May 1974 and May 1976, Barrie Best returned. He led show tours of North American choruses and quartets and once again the result was publicity for barbershop and an increase in the number of members and barbershop clubs.

Jim Ramsey

An exiled Canadian barbershopper and member of the Scarborough (Toronto) Chapter, Jim had been transferred by his company to Tyneside in 1971. After his meetings with Barrie Best in Crawley and St Albans Jim set up a meeting for Barrie in the Imperial Hotel, Newcastle on 1 October 1971. In Barrie's own words, the meeting was 'the highlight of the entire trip; twenty-eight men attended. We



Jim Ramsey presenting the archives of the Tyneside Club to Alan Johnson.

did some fine singing with three quartets trying the song after we worked for an hour with the group as a chorus'.

Two weeks later seventeen of the twenty-eight men met in a Royal Air Force hut in Gosforth, Newcastle and formed the Tyneside Barbershop Harmony Club, with Jim as Musical Director. Unfortunately for the Club, Jim Ramsey's company transferred him to Brussels in 1972. Jim became a barbershop

commuter; regularly turning up for Club meetings while the chorus was directed by his successor Bert Grimshaw. The Club became the largest ever British Barbershop Club by 1976 with one hundred and fourteen members; unfortunately the Club de-registered from the Association in 1985.

John Odom



John, another Canadian and member of the Scarborough Chapter, had been in the UK visiting his brother Chuck in Brighton at the time of Barrie Best's tour of Britain. John and Chuck attended the meeting held at the Crawley Club and Chuck was so fired up by Barrie that he joined the Crawley Club soon after.

Some weeks later Chuck was

encouraged by members of the Crawley Club to form a club in Brighton. On 29 November, twelve men, including Crawley's Assistant Musical Director Bob Walker, held an inaugural meeting in Chuck's home and the Brighton and Hove Barbershop Club was formed. The chorus was called *The Hove Harmonisers*.



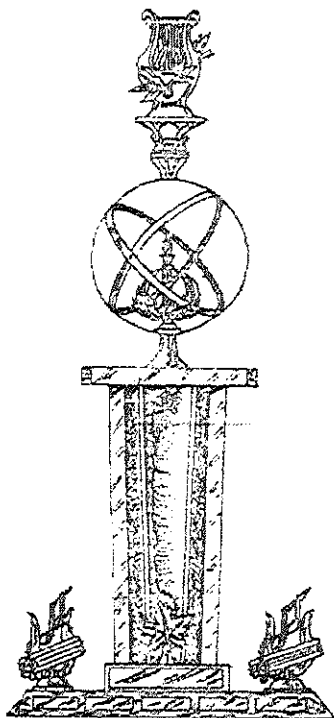
Chuck Odom

Johnny Cairns

Past International Vice President of SPEBSQSA, Johnny Cairns, a member of Etobicoke Chapter, Ontario, was guest of honour at a testimonial dinner in 1972 at Hamilton, Ontario, when he received a few well-deserved presentations. One of the awards was a pair of plane tickets to enable him to travel to England with his wife Dorothy, as the Ontario District of SPEBSQSA Harmony Ambassador (liaison) to the British Barbershop Clubs. This liaison with the British clubs resulted from a decision by the Ontario District when they had voted unanimously to affiliate the four UK Clubs into the Ontario District.

In addition, Johnny was given a special twenty-nine inch trophy, also donated by the Ontario District, to be known as the Johnny Cairns British Isles Harmony Encouragement Award. Along with the trophy, went ten dollars worth of music, generously donated by the Etobicoke Chapter, to be presented each time the trophy was awarded to a British club.

Johnny himself presented the trophy to the Crawley Club on 23 August 1972, when he visited the Club with his wife Dorothy. During his stay in Britain, Johnny visited all four existing British Barbershop Clubs. These were Tyneside, Brighton and Hove, Bournemouth and Crawley. He expressed the wish that the trophy would be passed on to another club following the principle of encouraging barbershop in Britain.



The trophy was later passed on to the Tyneside Club to mark their hosting of the Association's first Convention held in Newcastle in 1974. The next year, at the December 1975 Convention, the trophy went to the Brighton Club who organised the event. The year 1976 saw the trophy again passed to the Tyneside Club when their Chairman John Booth managed the Convention in Birmingham. Next year, Roy Philips, Chairman of the Leicester Club, received the trophy, when Leicester hosted the Convention at the De Montfort Hall.

*The Johnny Cairns British
Isles Harmony Encouragement
Award*



Johnny Cairns



The 1973 National Gathering

During 1972, regular contacts were maintained between the four British clubs: Tyneside, Brighton and Hove, Bournemouth and Crawley. Members paid occasional inter-club visits, generally between the Crawley and Brighton Clubs. Often Jim Ramsey participated when he was in the London area on company business. As these informal liaisons continued, the idea was floated to arrange a get-together of the members of the four clubs and initially it was going to be held somewhere in the Midlands. This idea was soon abandoned, however, when the Chairman of the Tyneside Club, Fred Williams, proposed that the Crawley Club, as the first and longest established British Barbershop Club, should have the honour of hosting the first national gathering.



Crawley Chordsmen. Host Chorus for the 1973 National Gathering of British Barbershoppers

The Event at Hazlewick School

The first gathering of British Barbershop Clubs was held at Hazlewick Middle School, Crawley, on Saturday 6 May 1973.

The full day event was organised by Crawley Club member Robin Pond together with his team of around thirty Crawley Club members and wives together with the *Crawley Sweet Adelines* and others.

Four men's choruses took part. They were the *Tyneside Men* from Newcastle, *Hove Harmonisers* chorus from Brighton and the *Dolphinaires* chorus from Bournemouth, in addition to the hosts the *Crawley Chordsmen*. Two ladies' choruses *Purbrook Sweet Adelines* from Portsmouth and joint hosts, *Crawley Sweet Adelines* also attended and together with wives, husbands and friends made up the three hundred and fifty who attended.

The Participants

Eight men's quartets attended. They were; *Christchurch Chordsmen* from Bournemouth, *Cosmopolitans*, *Five Bridge Four* and *Razorstrop Four* from Tyneside, *Sea Sharps* from Brighton, *Beckford Brothers*, *Chordial Four* and *Four Royals* from Crawley.

In addition, there were three ladies quartets from Crawley, *Petrified Four*, *Fourtunettes* and *Sweet Union* and two Sweet Adelines quartets from Purbrook.

Starting at 2.30pm, a varied programme was organised with quartet coaching and the showing of Society convention films. Songs and tags were taught and talks were given on barbershop harmony. There were club exhibition displays to see and meetings of officials from all four clubs were arranged. Meals were laid on for all the guests. The main activity was getting to know, socialise and sing with barbershoppers from the other clubs but there was plenty of time for woodshedding.

Showtime at Hazlewick

At 7.15pm it was *Showtime* and Harry Danser spoke for everyone, expressing his 'thrill on this memorable day, one that will go down in the annals of barbershop history'. After briefly referring to the early days of the various clubs, Harry happily pointed out that, 'the love of barbershop and the good feeling it fosters tends to keep one young. Ladies and gentlemen, barbershoppers all, thank you for coming along and just keep bustin' those chords to your heart's content'.

The show was the highlight of the day, when all seven choruses and thirteen quartets sang for an appreciative audience of their fellow barbershoppers.

Although no professional recording was made, there was an amateur recording of this historic event and a few copies are the prized possessions of a number of members of BABS to this day. During the event some serious discussions took place in a meeting of the men's club officers, chaired by Don Amos, and plans for the future of British barbershop was the main topic. The most

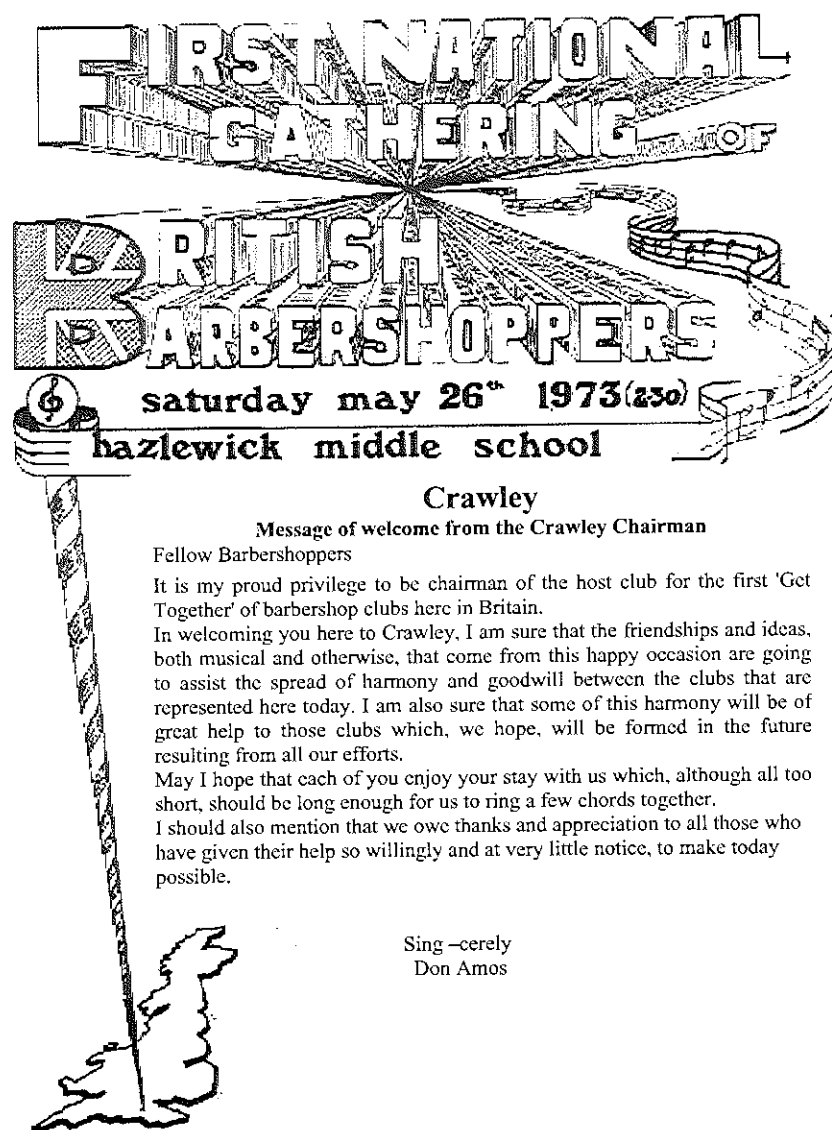
important and far-reaching decision agreed at this meeting was that an Association of British Barbershop Clubs would be established.

The Presentations

As the day drew to a close, a series of presentations was made to Harry Danser. The first was the plaque from SPEBSQSA with a letter from Barrie Best. The second was an illuminated address and silver rose bowl engraved 'To Britain's No.1 Barbershopper' that was presented by Don Amos on behalf of the Crawley Club to Harry on his retirement as club secretary.

Yet another important final ceremony was performed as Don Amos presented the beautiful Johnny Cairns British Isles Harmony Encouragement Award to Jim Ramsey who accepted it on behalf of the Tyneside Club in recognition of their rapid growth and enthusiasm. In his acceptance speech Jim declared, 'Roll on 1974 and the second British Gathering in Newcastle'.

This first national gathering was voted a huge success and grateful thanks flowed in to the Crawley Club Organizing Committee for all their efforts.



Crawley

Message of welcome from the Crawley Chairman

Fellow Barbershoppers

It is my proud privilege to be chairman of the host club for the first 'Get Together' of barbershop clubs here in Britain.

In welcoming you here to Crawley, I am sure that the friendships and ideas, both musical and otherwise, that come from this happy occasion are going to assist the spread of harmony and goodwill between the clubs that are represented here today. I am also sure that some of this harmony will be of great help to those clubs which, we hope, will be formed in the future resulting from all our efforts.

May I hope that each of you enjoy your stay with us which, although all too short, should be long enough for us to ring a few chords together.

I should also mention that we owe thanks and appreciation to all those who have given their help so willingly and at very little notice, to make today possible.

Sincerely
Don Amos

The First British Club

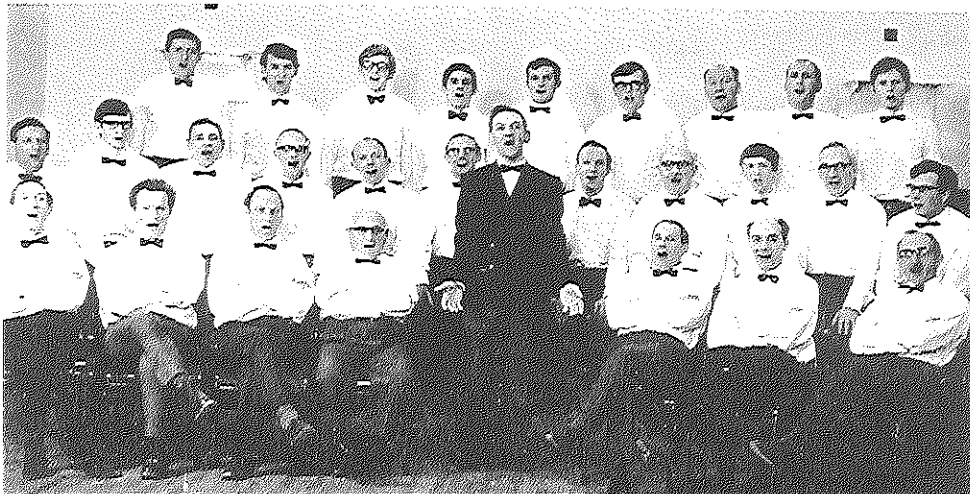


The Crawley Club was founded on 4 November 1964. The story was chronicled by one of its members, Jonathan Hershman, as being an exciting tale of the first group of men in Britain to form a barbershop chorus. In Jonathan's own words, 'the early years were ones of hope, frustration and finally of triumph; from beginning to end, a story of love and fellowship. This was to be a family that grew until it embraced first tens, then hundreds and later thousands of men. The inspiration came from one man, the late Harry Danser'.

The Birth of the Club

The *Crawley Chordsmen* came into being almost four years to the day after the formation of the first British barbershop quartet, *The Barbershop Four*. The Chorus repertoire increased steadily, including songs such as *Sweet Roses of Morn*, *Down Our Way* and *Smilin' Through*. Don Amos recalled, 'We were learning about a song a week'.

On 27 February 1965, the *Crawley Chordsmen* performed their first sing-out at St. Francis Mental Hospital, Haywards Heath. Fourteen men sang that night supported by *The Barbershop Four* with a programme that included *The Chordbusters' March*, *The Old Songs*, *Dear Old Girl* and *Sweet Sixteen*. Their finale was a reprise of *The Chordbusters' March*.



The Crawley Chordsmen, circa 1966

On 18 May 1965, the first Annual General Meeting took place in the Danser home. George Howe was elected Chairman, Harry Danser as Secretary and Tony Danser as Treasurer and Musical Director. Two significant decisions were made at the meeting. One was that Harry Danser be recognised as Founder of the Club and that George Shields be made an Honorary Member.

By the end of 1965 membership had reached thirty. On 30 November, the *Chordsmen* entered their first-ever contest in a class

for any combination or number of unaccompanied voices at the Worthing Music Festival. They were placed second.

A Slight Misunderstanding

Harry Danser was in regular contact with Bob Johnson and Barrie Best of SPEBSQSA bemoaning the lack of progress in the spread of barbershop throughout Britain. In one letter to Bob Johnson on 11 July 1968, he wrote that recently he had received a letter from an Ivor Smullen. Ivor described himself as a freelance journalist and author, at that time researching material for a book on barbers and barbershops. He wanted to know something about barbershop activities and about the American Society. Harry replied at length sending leaflets from SPEBSQSA and touching on the origins of barbershop and how the word came to be used. However, Mr. Smullen's interest was not in the music. When he had first enquired he had been under the impression that all the members of the club were barbers, in which case it might have been worth a mention in his book.

Early Events at Crawley

On 1 September 1968, Crawley held its first Quartet Contest for the Harry Danser Trophy. *The Crofters* singing *Side By Side* were the winners. They were Ron Avis, Don Amos, Alan McFadyean and Steve Elliot. Crawley held its first show on 15 March 1969, called *This is Barbershop* produced by John Danser with thirty-five men on stage.

The Barbershop Capital of England



Don Donahue, President of PROBE, the Society's PRO organisation wrote to Harry Danser on 14 October saying, 'How would you like to have a tenor who sang in the Internationals last year and was placed second with the *Tidelanders Chorus*? His name is Bob Walker - he is also a quartet man. According to my Worldbook map it lists East Grinstead as being only a few miles from you. Crawley is

evidently too small to list. Wait until they hear it's the barbershop capital of England. Go get him'. As it happened, Harry did not need to 'go get him'. Before Bob and his wife left the States, where he had been working for five years as a salesman in the chemical industry, Bob contacted SPEBSQSA in Kenosha and was given details of the Crawley Club. Within twenty-four hours of his return to England, he was in touch with Crawley and attended a committee meeting the same evening. Soon after, Bob Walker became Assistant Musical Director of the club and took over as MD when Tony Danser retired in 1974.

A Growing Number of Clubs

On 3 January 1972, Harry Danser wrote triumphantly to George Shields telling him that following Barrie Best's tour of the country,

two clubs had started up; Tyneside founded on 14 October 1971 by Jim Ramsey and Brighton and Hove by Chuck Odom on 29 November 1971. Harry continued that he was expecting a third club to start up very soon in Bournemouth, a town that George would remember visiting on his last trip. 'You set the trail blazing in 1964, George, we have a lot to thank you for ', wrote Harry.

Crawley On Tour

In August 1973 a party of ninety-four people, including thirty-five *Crawley Chordsmen*, set off to tour the Toronto area of Canada. During this memorable trip the group visited the SPEBSQSA Canadian Chapters of East York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo and St. Catherines. At various show venues they met members of other Canadian Chapters such as Grimsby, Niagara and Fort Erie. Chapters from over the US border were not neglected as the party made the acquaintance of those from Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Rochester, Lima and Monroe.

First National Champions

Six months later, on 16 February 1974, the Association of British Barbershop Clubs was formed and gave extra impetus to the spread of barbershop harmony throughout the UK. Later that year at the Association's first national convention in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *The Ringleaders* of Crawley and Brighton became the first national quartet champions. The following year at the Brighton Convention, the *Crawley Chordsmen*, under the direction of Bob Walker, won the first Association Chorus championship. With Bob directing the chorus for the next nine years, the *Crawley Chordsmen* won the Crawley Plaque as champions in 1976, 1978 and 1984. The twentieth anniversary of the first British Barbershop Harmony Club was thus celebrated in style.



British Barbershop Association

As mentioned in the previous chapter the Association was conceived during informal meetings held at the first national gathering of British barbershop clubs at Crawley on 26 May 1973. Officers from the four clubs in existence at that time, Crawley, Tyneside, Brighton and Hove (one club) and Bournemouth were represented at these meetings in Hazlewick Middle School, Crawley, under the chairmanship of Don Amos of the Crawley club.

Association with SPEBSQSA?

One of the most significant items discussed was whether the British clubs should enter into direct association with SPEBSQSA, the American Barbershop Society. It was decided that, whilst such association was desirable, at that time it would be of little advantage, as the benefits gained would not warrant the expense. It was therefore agreed that instead an Association of British Barbershop Clubs should be formed. This Association would be formally registered and its aims would be to promote barbershop and to circulate information between the existing clubs.

A Centrally Organised Body

It was agreed that the governing body of the Association would consist of representatives of each club who would decide policy. It was hoped that a centrally organised body would be more efficient in looking after and promoting its objectives.

However, it was fully appreciated that existing ties with the American Barbershop Society should be maintained. As there was no wish to sever these ties, Harry Danser was asked to relay the decisions to the Society.

The meeting readily agreed to accept the offer of the Tyneside Club to host and organise the next year's convention over a whole weekend in Newcastle. The other clubs would be canvassed to ascertain their requirements for the convention.

Some time after the first gathering of clubs in Crawley a group of barbershop singers from Reading, including Gerry Holland, had learned of the existence of British barbershop clubs. Gerry and his small group, the *Minor Chords*, had been singing barbershop for some years in the Reading area. Gerry, a pilot with BOAC, had made contacts when he visited Society chapters during regular working visits to the USA. Now he got in touch with the Crawley Club.

Establishing the Association

During the summer and autumn of 1973 plans were made for a formal meeting with representatives of the four clubs to consider draft rules for the proposed formation of the Association of British Barbershop Harmony Clubs.

The meeting was convened at 10am on Saturday, 16 February 1974 in the Skyways Hotel, Heathrow. Those present were Gerry Holland and Pete Powell from Reading, George Beer and Den Tyrell representing Brighton and Hove, John Booth and Bert Grimshaw from Tyneside and Don Amos, Bob Walker and Eric Evans representing Crawley.

Don Amos was proposed as the Chairman for the meeting by Gerry Holland, seconded by Bob Walker and this was agreed. Eric Evans took the minutes of the meeting.

The primary object of the Association was to act as the national governing body to encourage and foster the growth of barbershop harmony singing. It was to do this by promoting good relationships between clubs and media awareness of barbershop singing. It was agreed that the name of the Association would be subject to suggestions from the clubs. Membership of the Association would be on a club basis, clubs being referred to as member clubs. To be eligible for membership of the Association each club would need at least eight members. Every club applying for membership of the Association would pay a registration fee of £1.00 before the membership would become effective.

It was decided that subscriptions should be based upon the number of individual members in a club and that members of quartets should be required to be chorus members and not become isolated from general club activity.

The running of the Association's affairs was to be managed by a Council comprising two representative members from each club. The Council was to have power to elect an executive committee comprising chairman, general secretary and treasurer. The Council was to meet at least twice a year for general business. The Annual General Meeting of the Association would normally be held in the second week of January each year to receive a report and statement of accounts for the preceding year and to transact any other business.

All meetings would commence with the singing of *The Old Songs* and finish with *Let's Get Together Again/ Keep The Whole World Singing*.

A badge for the Association was discussed and it was agreed that a competition should be held to obtain ideas for a design so the Council could make a final selection.

Six weeks after the Association was formed, another meeting was held in March to discuss the formal rules, the relationship between the Association and SPEBSQSA and to appoint officers of the Association. At this meeting the Council appointed officers and the Executive of the Association as follows:

Chairman –Don Amos (Crawley), General Secretary –Den Tyrell (Brighton & Hove), Treasurer –David Logan Wood (Tyneside).

At this meeting it was learned that there were other groups of men singing barbershop in Britain. Groups in Liverpool, Nottingham, Littlehampton and Bristol were noted. The newly appointed General Secretary, Den Tyrell, was detailed to make contact with these groups and invite them to join the fledgling Association of British Barbershop Harmony Clubs.

Masterminded by Fred Williams and his team of Tyneside members, the Association's first National Barbershop Convention, to be held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 27 and 28 July 1974, was in its final stages of preparation.

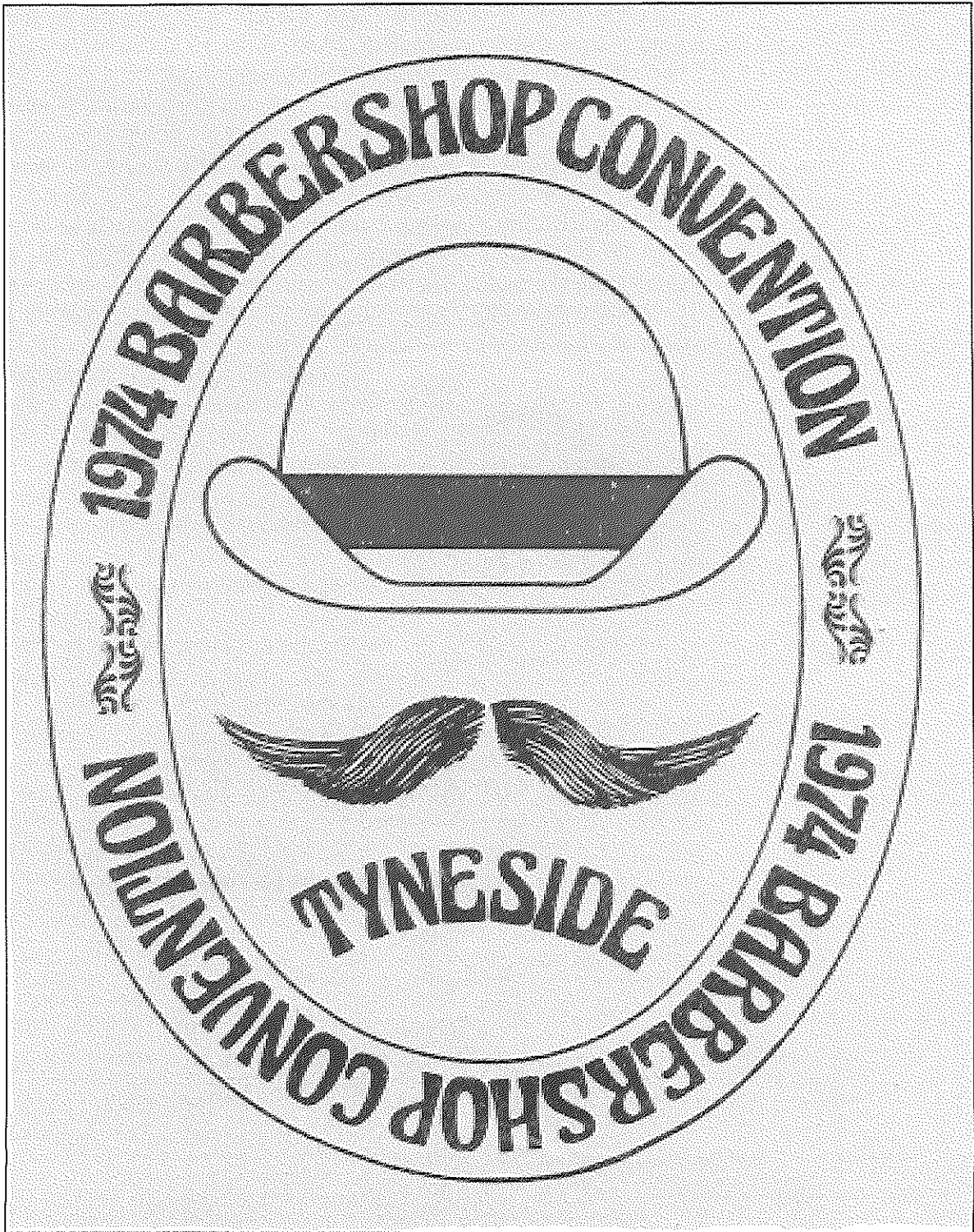
At the next meeting, held on 5 October, some nine weeks after the Newcastle Convention, the Treasurer reported that the Association's finances showed a cash balance in hand of £29.00. He thanked those clubs who had paid their dues and appealed to the others to do so as soon as possible.



Applications for membership of the Association were then received from the following clubs: East Anglian Villageaires, Bournemouth, Liverpool, Leicester, Stockport, Colchester and Nottingham.

The Treasurer, David Logan Wood proposed, seconded by General Secretary Den Tyrell, that the Clubs be accepted immediately as members of the now re-named British Association of Barbershoppers.

At the next meeting of Council on 11 January 1975, eleven months after the inaugural meeting, the Treasurer was able to report that the Association's finances had improved to a total of £75.00. Of greater significance was that two more clubs, Bristol and Preston, had registered with the Association, bringing the total to thirteen clubs and three hundred and seventy members.





The Newcastle 1974 Convention

The first national Barbershop Convention was held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, over the weekend of 27 to 28 July 1974. This Convention contrasted in many ways with the National Gathering held fourteen months earlier in Crawley. As the event took place over the August Bank Holiday weekend, the Convention was to be called *Harmony Holiday* and this title was emblazoned over the cover of the souvenir programme.



Fred Williams

A Two Day Event

The 1973 event was held on one Saturday in a school in Crawley. The Newcastle Convention, run by a team from the Tyneside Club and managed by Fred Williams, was spread over two days. Most of the delegates arrived on the Friday and were to depart late Sunday so the necessary accommodation was arranged in the Newcastle

University Henderson Halls of Residence.

Quartets Only

Unlike the earlier event, three contests were held. The first British Barbershop Quartet Championships took place with semi-finals run on the Saturday morning. The top-scoring three quartets competed in the final as part of the Saturday evening show. No chorus contest was held. The other two events were a Sweet Adeline Quartet Contest, held on the Sunday morning, followed by a fun event called the Ad-Hoc Quartet Contest. This was run under outrageous rules and even the judges and officials joined in to make it a hilarious affair.

Interesting Statistics

The contest to decide the first British Barbershop Quartet Champions attracted fifteen quartets, five from Tyneside, four from Crawley, three from Reading, two from Brighton and one foursome from two clubs, Crawley and Brighton. The three quartets from the

Reading club were drawn from only seven club members, so some of them sang in more than one quartet. There was even some switching of voice parts.

British Rail in a Lather

The Reading Club members achieved some fame, not to mention some excellent publicity for the Convention, when they appeared on Esther Rantzen's *That's Life* BBC TV programme. Here they highlighted the difficulties they encountered in their efforts to organise a charter train from British Rail to transport seventy-five barbershop singers and supporters to the Newcastle Convention. Two hundred barbershop singers who had travelled north by other means on the Friday greeted the rail passengers with a massed singing of *You're as Welcome as the Flowers in May* as the train pulled into Newcastle Central Station. The convention hosts, members of the Tyneside Club, swelled the ranks.

Gaining Experience

Four ladies' quartets, two from Purbrook, one from Crawley and one from Reading sang in the Sweet Adelines contest. The *Blue Birds* of Purbrook took first place.

There were seven Ad Hoc quartet contestants. One of them, *The Judges*, made up from the compere, the judges and the contest organiser, surprisingly, did not come first. That honour went to a foursome called *The Diddymen*, one of whose members was a twelve-year-old boy.

There were some problems to be addressed in staging the quartet contest proper. For example, quartets had to be persuaded to register their entry in advance of the event. It was necessary to devise contest rules without benefit, at that time, of guidance from SPEBSQSA. Of course, competent and impartial judges needed to be recruited. All this occurred in a situation where no previous experience of such contests existed. On the Sunday morning the appointed judges were persuaded to offer verbal critiques to all the competing quartets.

The Saturday evening show in the Lyric Theatre featured the *Monroe Chorus* from Michigan, USA, two Society quartets, *Expression Marks* from Lima, Ohio and the *Harmony Hounds* of Battle Creek, Michigan. In addition there was a foursome from Denmark *Kvartet 70* and the winning quartet *The Ringleaders* from Crawley and Brighton and Hove.

Membership Surge

Around the time of this Convention, the total number of members of the Association was about two hundred. Members of barbershop clubs soon to be registered with the Association, from Brandon, Stockport, Liverpool, Cliftonville, Cwmbran and Leeds boosted membership numbers.

International Representation

American delegates came from Monroe and Lima, Elgin, Ohio and Michigan. Canada sent the Etobicoke Chapter and Scandinavia was represented by the group from Denmark.

Interestingly, a small chorus from the American airbase at Mildenhall in East Anglia, under the direction of Charles Wilson, went by the name of *The Midland Chorus*. One of the American founders of the group was under the impression that if the area along English Channel was classed as the south of England then East Anglia must therefore be in the Midlands. Some time later the group registered with the Association as East Anglia Barbershop Harmony Club with a new chorus name of the *East Anglian Villageaires*.

The Trophies

Two trophy presentations were made before the closing ceremony. *The Ringleaders*, the first Champion Quartet, received the Tyneside Trophy. Bert Grimshaw, MD of the Tyneside Chorus, presented the Johnny Cairns British Isles Harmony Encouragement Award to George Beer, Chairman of the Brighton Club, to mark the hosting and organising of the next National Barbershop Convention at Brighton in December 1975. The practice of passing on the award to the host club who were to organise the following year's convention was carried on until the 1977 convention, held in the De Montfort Hall, Leicester.

British Association of Barbershoppers
Tyneside Convention 1974
Henderson Hall Newcastle

Association Competition 2pm 27 July Sweet Adelines 10.30am 28 July

Rules

1. Each member of a quartet shall be a member of the British Barbershop clubs, though not necessarily of the same club.
2. Quartets shall sing two songs of their own choice lasting a minimum of four minutes and not more than six minutes. Penalty points will be imposed for each fifteen seconds or part thereof where an under or over-run occurs.
3. Judging will be in the following categories: harmony and accuracy, balance and blend, stage presence, arrangement.
4. Each judge may award up to ten points in his own category. In the event of a tie, he may award one point to the quartet that, in his view, gave the best overall performance.
5. The names of all competing quartets must be registered with the Quartet Contest Organiser not later than 1 June 1974.
6. Quartets will be allowed to use any stage properties or costume in furtherance of the entertainment value of the songs they are to sing.
7. No two quartets may perform using the same quartet name. Acceptance of the registration of a quartet name will be on a first come first served basis.
8. A quartet may use the same songs through all stages of the contest, including the finals.
9. Preliminaries of the contest will take place away from the theatre but the final three quartets will be expected on stage of the theatre on Saturday evening.
10. All music arrangements are expected to be pure barbershop but borderline cases will be accepted.
11. Quartets should register the songs they will sing with the Quartet Contest Organiser who, on receipt of a second notification for the same song, will advise the second quartet that the song has already been submitted. This will not debar the second quartet from singing the song but will give them the opportunity to change if they wish.

Order of Appearance.

Men's Quartets

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| 1. Metremen | Reading |
| 2.4 in a Bar | Tyneside |
| 3. Ringleaders | Crawley |
| 4. Newtown Ringers | Crawley |
| 5. Berkshire Berks | Reading |
| 6. Cosmopolitans | Tyneside |
| 7. Beckford Brothers | Crawley |
| 8. Fortunairs | Crawley |
| 9. Five Bridge Four | Tyneside |
| 10. Forefathers | Reading |
| 11. County Chords | Tyneside |
| 12. Home and Colonial | Brighton |
| 13. Union Jacks | Crawley |
| 14.4 Men in a Bar | Brighton |
| 15. Razorstrop 4 | Tyneside |

Sweet Adelines Quartets

- | | |
|-----------------|----------|
| 1. Purbrook No2 | Purbrook |
| 2.4 in Accord | Crawley |
| 3. Purbrook No1 | Purbrook |
| 4. Minor Birds | Reading |

Quartet Contest Organiser

Gordon Jeffrey
7 Ovington Grove
Newcastle upon Tyne

British Association of Barbershoppers

Tyneside Convention 1974

Results of Quartet Contests

Men's Final held at People's Theatre, Newcastle, Saturday 27 July 1974

Rank	Quartet Name	Club	*HA	*BB	*SP	*Arr	Less Time Penalty	Net Score
1	Ringleaders	Crawley & Brighton	9	7	8	7	-	31
2	Beckford Bros	Crawley	7.5	5.5	7	5	-	25
3	Five Bridge 4	Tyneside	8	6	5	6	1	24

*HA - Harmony Accuracy *BB - Balance and Blend *SP - Stage Presence * Arr - Arrangement

Men's Preliminary held at Henderson Hall, Newcastle, Saturday 27 July 1974

1	Ringleaders	Crawley & Brighton	8.5	7	8.5	7	-	31
2	Beckford Bros	Crawley	7.5	5.5	8.5	5	-	26
3	Five Bridge 4	Tyneside	7.5	6	8	5	1	25.5
4	Forefathers	Reading	7	5.5	7.5	5	-	25
5 Joint	Newtown Ringers	Crawley	8	4	8	4	-	24
5 Joint	4 Men in a Bar	Brighton	6.5	6	5.5	7	1	24
6	Cosmopolitans	Tyneside	6.5	4.5	5.5	7	-	23.5
7 Joint	4 in a Bar	Tyneside	7.5	5.5	5	5	-	23
7 Joint	Union Jacks	Crawley	7	5.5	4.5	6	-	23
8	Berkshire Berks	Reading	6.5	4	5.5	8	2	22
9	Fortunairs	Crawley	7	5	5.25	4	1	20.25
10	County Chords	Tyneside	5	5.5	3.5	6	-	20
11	Razorstrop 4	Tyneside	5	5	5	4	-	19
12	Metremen	Reading	6.5	4.5	3.5	3	-	17.5

Sweet Adelines' Contest held at Henderson Hall, Newcastle, Sunday 28 July 1974

1*	Blue Birds	Purbrook	7.5	2.5	8	5	1	22
2	4 in a Chord	Crawley	6.5	4.5	4	7	-	22
3	Minor Birds	Reading	7.5	2.5	6	4	-	20

* First Place awarded for greater harmony accuracy category.

Ad Hoc Krazy Komey Kontest held at Henderson Hall, Sunday 28 July 1974

Winner - The Diddymen

Quartet Organiser - Gordon Jeffrey (Tyneside) Chairman of Panel - Art Lusty (USA)
 Harmony Accuracy - Lane Bushong (USA) Balance and Blend - Ron Mell (USA)
 Stage Presence - Bob Davis (Canada) Arrangement - Merle Clayton (USA)
 Timer - Dale E. Schroeder (USA) Secretary - John Thompson (Tyneside)

District or Affiliate?



During his tour of Britain Barrie Best, Executive Director of SPBSQSA held a meeting in Brighton on 21 September 1971. Chuck Odom and his wife were present and a chorus of twelve members of the Crawley Club sang a couple of songs under the direction of Tony Danser. The twelve Crawley men discussed the American Society and expressed their hopes for more clubs to be formed in Britain. They were receptive to the suggestion that if more clubs could be formed, they could be directly affiliated to the Society, rather than having a separate British organisation.

In his report to the Society on his return to the USA, Barrie Best further suggested that if this were to occur, it would perhaps necessitate a change in the Society's initials to SPEBSQSI - Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing International. He also suggested a slight scaling down of chapter and district dues might be necessary in England as £9.00 to £10.00 a year - approximately \$25.00 - might be a little high.

Affiliation Discussion Widens

In September 1971, the most pressing needs were to spread the word about barbershop harmony to the public, to seek out enthusiasts and encourage them to form new barbershop clubs. Barrie Best's tour of the UK planted the first seeds of this growth; before he returned to the USA, the first of three new clubs formed in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyneside. Within the next few weeks the Brighton and Hove Club and the Bournemouth Club had set up and the four British barbershop clubs were soon arranging the first get-together in Crawley. Meanwhile, discussions, both in the new clubs and between the clubs, on the form that the relationship with the American Society should take, were keen and wide-ranging.

It was acknowledged by all the clubs and their members that it was not only desirable, but vital, to have a close relationship with SPEBSQSA for a whole range of reasons, not least of which was that the British clubs had so much to learn from the Americans.

Statement of Intent

At the meeting that took place at the National Gathering the question of association with SPEBSQSA was top of the agenda. It was unanimously agreed that such a close association, was desirable, but the benefits to be gained would not warrant the expense involved.

It was fully appreciated, however, that ties with our American counterparts must be maintained. Harry Danser was asked to acquaint the Society of the situation with the British clubs.

Formalising the Relationship

At the founding meeting of the Association, on 16 February 1974, it was felt that formal affiliation with the Society would be advantageous in order to utilise the specialist facilities enjoyed by the Society. At the meeting of the Association on 5 October 1974, a lengthy discussion took place on proposed affiliation terms offered by SPEBSQSA and the implications for British clubs and there was considerable negotiation during 1974 and 1975. Principally this concerned the range of services and materials to be provided by the Society and the way these would be paid for by the Association, the clubs and even by the individual club members. The powers to negotiate on behalf of the Association were given to the Chairman, Don Amos, and those involved from the Society were International President Dick Ellenberger, Immediate Past International President, Leon Avakian and Barrie Best.

A Strong Bond of Fellowship

The formal agreement was not just a legal arrangement or a mere business settlement between two organisations on either side of the Atlantic. The affiliation of the Association with SPEBSQSA has grown over the years to become a strong bond of fellowship in barbershop harmony and many friendships have been forged.

In 1975 the Association was the first in the barbershop world outside America to be affiliated to the Society. This showed the way for a worldwide family of barbershop groups to follow the example.

The list of Barbershop Friends Worldwide includes:

Australian Association of Men Barbershop Singers (AAMBS)

Barbershop in Germany (BinG!)

Dutch Association of Barbershop Singers (DABS)

Irish Association of Barbershop Singers (IABS)

New Zealand Association of Barbershop Singers (NZABS)

Society of Nordic Barbershop Singers (SNOBS)

Southern Part of Africa Tonsorial Singers (SPATS)



*Barrie Best and
Don Amos sign the
Affiliation Agreement*

Propagation of Barbershop Harmony



According to James L. McClelland, in his book *A History of Barbershop Harmony*, Owen C. Cash and Rupert Hall, founders of the American Barbershop Society had the burning desire to organise a local club that they would call *The Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in the United States*. The inclusion of the word propagation epitomises the spirit of barbershop singers who have travelled far and wide to spread barbershop music. For many years lovers of harmony in Britain have enjoyed being on the receiving end of these activities.

Harry Danser, the father of the association that was to become the British Association of Barbershop Singers, talked of spending evenings at east London music halls in his youth, before the outbreak of World War 1, where he was thrilled by American barbershop foursomes such as the *Gotham Quartet* and the *Harmony Kings*.

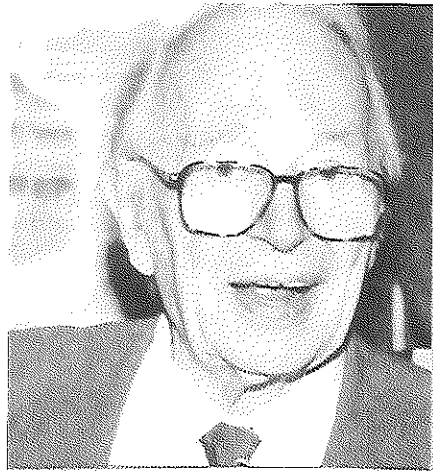
Many years later, in September 1964, Canadian George Shields, MD of the East York (Toronto) Chapter brought fifty members including *The Rhythm Counts* quartet (Toronto Chapter) with other chapter members, wives and friends to Britain. For nineteen days they sang on shows in Belfast, Dublin, Glasgow and London. During their tour they appeared on television and met high officials in each of the host countries.

More Overseas Tours

The East York Chorus, again under the direction of George Shields, set out on another overseas tour in September 1970. This time their venues were in England and Wales and several other European countries, travelling through Holland, Germany, Switzerland and France. In Britain they sang in Bath, Cardiff, Coventry and London. During their trip the East York Chapter members, in particular George Shields, invited the Crawley Chordsmen to undertake a tour of Ontario as guests of the Canadian Chapters in the Toronto area. After three years of intensive planning on both sides of the Atlantic, the Crawley party left for Canada on 10 August 1973.

The 1967 International Champion Quartet *Four Statesmen* and the *Four Naturals* quartet from Canada made a highly successful show tour of Britain in March 1973. In the process they made a big impression and many friends not least in BBC TV studios. It was no surprise therefore, when soon afterwards a BBC

*Humphrey
Lyttelton*



eight-man crew from London, headed by Philip Lewis, travelled to Portland to film for a week at the International Barbershop Convention in July 1973. The hour-long BBC documentary film, entitled *The Most Happy Fellows*, presented by the well-known jazz trumpeter, bandleader and TV personality Humphrey Lyttelton, was shown on BBC TV in the autumn of 1973. By arrangement with SPEBSQSA,

copies of this film were offered for rental to Society Chapters in the USA and Canada. Although copies of the film were not made available for rental in the UK, the documentary created considerable interest and is still remembered by some men who were involved in the early days of the Association.

The following year the BBC sent another film crew, again headed by Philip Lewis, to Kansas City. They made an hour-long documentary of the 1974 International Convention and as before, copies were available for hire to Society Chapters.

Barrie Best Returns

In 1971, during his one-man tour of British cities, Barrie Best, Executive Director of SPEBSQSA had promised to return and tour the UK with a chorus and several top quartets. He kept this promise in May 1974 when he led a hundred-man barbershop chorus made up of seventy-five chapters from nineteen states and four Canadian provinces on the first Society-sponsored tour of the United Kingdom. Ninety-three non-singers accompanied them. Much sightseeing was possible but the party made the presentation of



Bob Johnson

shows a major activity. Bob Johnson directed the large chorus. Four quartets performed: the *Four Statesmen*, *Good Life*, *Credit Chords* and *Staff Chords*. *Staff Chords*, made up from members of the SPEBSQSA international staff, included the then current international president, Leon Avakian, with Sam Kennedy, Bob Johnson and Barrie Best. Shows were performed, sometimes on BBC radio, in Brighton, Southampton, Bournemouth, Bristol,

Birmingham, Stockport, Sunderland, Leeds, York and Reading. While staying in Leeds the party filmed a series of episodes for BBC TV in the *Palace of Varieties Music Hall* programme and these were screened over a period of several weeks.

The regular procedure on the trip was for Sam Kennedy to gain as many names of interested local men as possible while a show was in progress and schedule a later meeting of these men to encourage the organisation of a new group locally. The plan worked in nearly all cases; new clubs were soon established, in East Anglia, Leicester, Colchester, Nottingham, Bristol, Liverpool, East Dorset and Sunderland.

The Dawn of Affiliation

Leon Avakian was a busy member of the travelling party. In addition to singing baritone with the *Staff Chords* he was frequently interviewed by BBC and other TV companies. It was during this tour that a meeting was held in the Old Ship Hotel in Brighton between Don Amos, Chairman of the Association and Leon Avakian, President of SPEBSQSA, to discuss the form of an affiliation agreement between the two organisations. The SPEBSQSA Executive Committee and the Council of the Association ratified the terms of the affiliation later. This was the first time that the Society had made an affiliation agreement.



Leon Avakian

Barrie Best Again

Two years later, in May 1976, with a chorus of one hundred and ten men, under the direction of Dave Stevens, Barrie Best led another successful show tour of Britain, accompanied by three times Silver Medallist quartet *Pacificaires*, the *Pittsburgh Four* and *Canadian Heritage* quartets. Among other TV appearances, the group sang live on a BBC TV programme, *Pebble Mill At One*. One appearance, which created great interest, was called *Uncle Sam Meets the Red Dragon*. Here the Society Chorus shared the stage in Ebbw Vale with the *Pendyrus Male Voice Choir* and the programme was screened on BBC TV in September 1976.

At one of the 1976 shows, at the Davenport Theatre in Stockport, Barrie Best told the audience that there were representatives of several UK barbershop clubs in the theatre from Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Stockport, Tyneside and Wearside. He caused a hold-up for five minutes as he invited them all up on stage for the finale. When the last one was installed on stage, making a chorus of around two hundred and fifty, he then introduced the 1975 Association Champion Quartet the *Five Bridge Four*. Barrie sprang a surprise on them by asking them to sing, which they did to rapturous applause.

The Association Grows

In the first five years of the Association, the number of registered clubs increased from five to forty-six and the membership from about one hundred to eleven hundred. Much of this growth can be credited to the exposure of the public to the show tours of visiting barbershop quartets and choruses from North America during that period.

During the next twenty years, a host of top quality quartets and choruses from America and Canada, including international champions, made much appreciated and well-received visits to the UK. Some appeared on Association convention shows while others undertook show tours, always with wholehearted support from local Association clubs.

The Trillium Chorus Tour

In the week before the 1984 BABS Convention at Warwick University, the Trillium Chorus arrived for a tour of northern clubs. Comprising fifty-four singers from seven chapters of the Ontario District of Canada, the total party of one hundred and three included the *Tri-City Slickers*, the 1976 Ontario District Champion



Quartet. As well as much singing, there were opportunities to renew acquaintance with the *Northernaires* whom they had previously met in October 1981 when the British group visited Ontario. At the BABS Convention, the *Trillium Chorus* joined the *Vocal Vikings Chorus* from Sweden in an interesting innovation when they

warmed for the chorus contest. A newly formed group from County Cork, all named Murphy, were given the task of mike coolers.

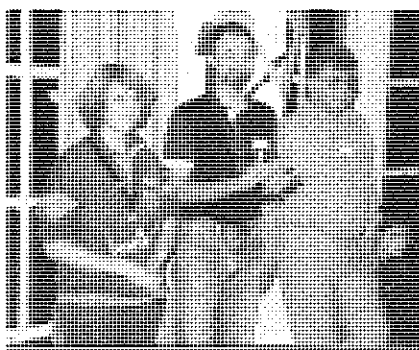
Four years later, in September 1988, another Canadian group visited in a party filling five coaches. Directed by George Shields and John Anderson, the one hundred and ten man *Tri-City Chorus* was accompanied by Ontario District Champion Quartets *Djà Vu* and *Tri-City Slickers* on a show tour taking in Crawley, Sheffield, Bournemouth and Tyneside.

These early tours made the greatest impact on live radio and TV audiences leading to a remarkable spread of barbershop throughout Britain and a consequent growth and development of Association clubs.

Quorn Hall Weekend

In February 1990 a Barbershop Weekend at Quorn Hall in Leicestershire was organised by BABS in co-operation with the British Federation of Young Choirs. The two-day event comprised a residential course for thirty-nine teachers, choir leaders and conductors. On the Saturday, John Grant, Rod Butcher and Rhiannon Whittle gave instruction on barbershop harmony and

taught several songs and tags to the adults. They were joined on the second day by sixty-two young singers for a Singing Day. The group divided into male and female sections, with John and Rod giving instruction to the men and boys, while Rhiannon directed the women and girls in another room. A number of experienced BABS and LABBS members, including BABS Champion Quartet *Curtain Call*, helped with the teaching.

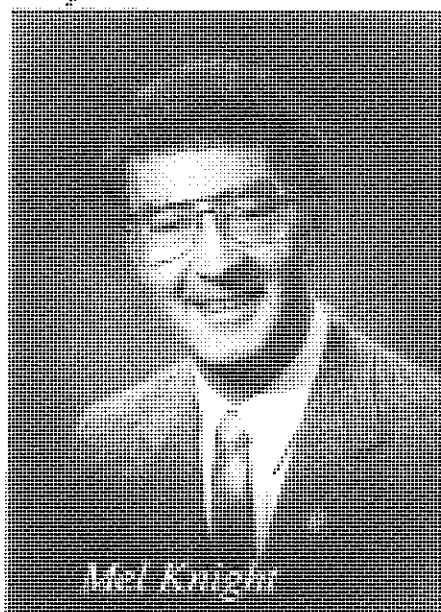


*Rhiannon Whittle,
Rod Butcher and
John Grant at
Quorn*

PRO's Geoff Howe from BABS and LABBS' Penny Chisholm set up displays publicising their organisations. John Carter manned the BABS shop and sold CDs and educational material. The event was rounded off with a quartet contest for the young singers.

Mel Knight Roadshow

BABS Director of Membership Development, Phil Jones and Alan Johnson, Manager of New and Non-BABS Clubs put forward, in March 1995, the idea of a project aimed at increasing the membership and number of clubs in the Association. The plan was to bring a top Society educator, experienced in initiating Society chapters, over to Britain. A series of barbershop shows were planned in several locations where new clubs were forming, to expose the area to quality BABS quartets and choruses. The aim was to provide inspiration and motivation to the membership of non-affiliated clubs to join BABS. It was hoped that men in the audience would be enticed to try singing barbershop harmony. The Society educator would provide coaching as he travelled around the COUNTRY.



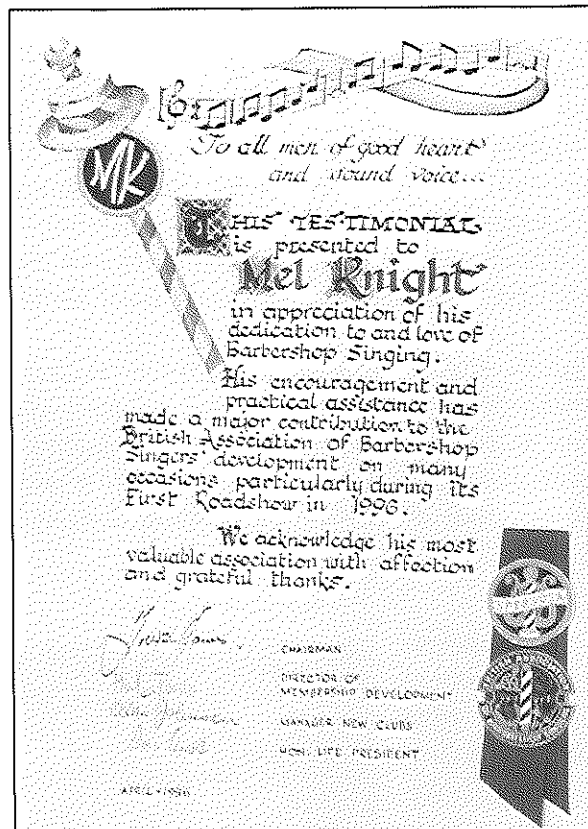
The Educator who flew to Britain and worked, voluntarily, from 27 March until 15 April 1996, was the newly retired SPEBSQSA Director of Music Services and Education, Mel Knight. Mel had been made an Honorary Life Member of BABS at the 1993 Harmony College in recognition of his contribution to the development of the Association.

During his twenty-day stay, which became known as the *Mel Knight Roadshow*, Mel was part of five very successful concerts, coached twenty-two choruses and helped bring quality barbershop

performances to communities that had never heard or seen it before. Mel was busy for almost every moment of his trip and in every respect the *Roadshow* project was a success.

The shows were performed in Tarbert (Argyll), Harrogate, Isle of Man, Leamington and Winchester. Six BABS quartets and seven BABS choruses took part - none asked for a fee. Steve Hall did a tremendous job transporting Mel to most of the venues and helped with the coaching and educational sessions.

Applications made for grants to cover some of the financing of this project, to the National Lottery, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the World Harmony Council were all unsuccessful. The costs of the events were met by BABS funds.



*The Mel Knight Testimonial
presented to commemorate his
Honorary Membership of the
Association 1996*

1975 Brighton Convention



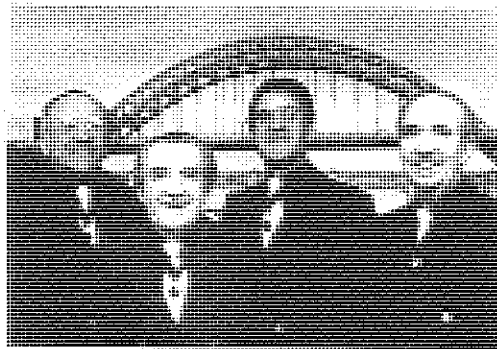
The first three British barbershop gatherings followed an organic pattern of development. The first club to form, Crawley, hosted the first get-together. The first Association convention, hosted by Tyneside, featured as its main event the first National Barbershop Quartet Contest. At the next convention, the first British Barbershop Chorus Contest was run, in addition to the National Quartet Competition.

This Brighton Convention was held over the weekend of 5 to 7 December 1975 and was hosted by the Brighton and Hove Barbershop Harmony Club, in the Butlin Ocean Hotel, Saltdean, Brighton. The Convention Manager was Chairman of the Brighton and Hove Club, Len Ward and his team comprised members of the club.

The chorus contest attracted an entry of sixteen choruses from Association clubs. A separate chorus contest was held for ladies' choruses, at that time described as Sweet Adelines. (Not to be confused with the association of the same name in the USA). The Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers (LABBS) was formed in 1976.

Contestants

Twenty-two quartets entered the Association Quartet contest. There were two each from Crawley, Tyneside, Brighton, Sunderland (later renamed Wearside), and single quartets from Reading, Stockport, Leicester, Liverpool, Chesham and Nottingham.



Five Bridge Four

Records of the origins of the other eight quartets are incomplete. The top six quartets to go through to the finals were *Five Bridge Four*-Gold Medal (Wearside), *Fortunairs*-Silver Medal (Crawley), *Barrytones*-Bronze Medal (Reading), *Sound Idea* (Brighton), *Senators* (Stockport) and *Mellowtones* (Leicester).

The first British Chorus Champions were the *Crawley Chordsmen* (C.D. Bob Walker), in second place were the *Tyneside Chorus* (C.D. Bert Grimshaw) and third were the *Reading Chorus* (C.D. Pete Powell).

Changes to Rules

Some changes had been made to the rules of the contests, categories of judging and scoring compared with the Newcastle convention. The contestants were judged under five instead of four categories. These were, Harmony Accuracy, Balance and Blend, Stage Presence, Arrangement and the extra one, Interpretation.

Unfortunately, the last two foursomes on stage in the quartet preliminary competition were either unfamiliar with the rules or became carried away by the excitement of the occasion. After singing the two songs allowed in the rules, they continued to sing more of their repertoire, resulting in disqualification by the judges.

The seven ladies' choruses and eight ladies' quartets competed under totally different judging categories of Music, Sound, Expression and Show.

Other Events

The weekend opened on Friday evening with a dance in the Main Hall commencing at 8.00pm and ending at midnight. During the dance, at 10.45pm, Len Ward welcomed the delegates to the convention and presented the Johnny Cairns British Isles Harmony Encouragement Award to the Reading Club. At 11.00pm the Mayor of Brighton, Councillor Nobby Clarke, performed the official opening of the Convention.

On Saturday morning whilst the Association Chorus competition was in progress in the Main Hall from 10.00am until 12 noon, the Sweet Adelines Chorus contest was being held in the Marine Ballroom. In the afternoon the Association quartet preliminary contest in the Main Hall ran from 2.30pm until 6.00pm whilst in the Marine Ballroom the Sweet Adelines quartet contest was held between 2.30 pm and 4.30pm.

Old Friends

Two old friends of the Association, both Canadians, officiated for both the Association contests. George Shields was Chairman of Judges whilst John Odom was secretary of the judging panels.

At 8.30pm on Saturday evening a show was held in the main hall. Making an impressive guest appearance were a top



*Struptaget Swedish
Quartet*

Sweet Adeline quartet *Bron's Tones*, from Alabama, USA. Another welcome foursome, who became hugely popular through their afterglow performances, was the Swedish quartet from Stockholm, *Struptaget*.

The first half featured the top six Association choruses and

the top three Sweet Adeline choruses. In part two of the show, the

finals of the Association Quartet contest was held, followed by the Sweet Adeline first, second and third placed quartets. The Association Champion quartet provided the finale.

With each of the six finalists in the Association Quartet championships singing two songs, the judges were struggling to determine and announce the final results. It was midnight before their work was finished.

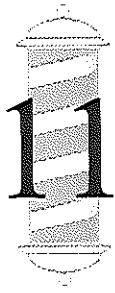
Affiliation Agreement Signing

The signing of an Affiliation Agreement between the Association and SPEBSQSA was one of the most significant events to take place during the convention. Chairman of the Association, Don Amos, signed on behalf of the Association and Barrie Best, Executive Director, on behalf of the Society.

Late on Saturday night, or rather early Sunday morning, prolonged afterglow and celebrations meant that the majority of the delegates had very little sleep. Their slumbers were cut short next morning, at around 7.00am, when everyone was rudely awakened by loud music on the PA system installed in every bedroom, an unwelcome Butlins extra facility. After breakfast, between 9.45 and 10.45am, bleary-eyed quartet contestants were treated to a Quartet Analysis Clinic given by similarly affected judges in the Marine Ballroom and in the Main Hall, the Ad Hoc Competition followed.

The convention closed after lunch with the presentation of the Quartet, Chorus and Ad-Hoc trophies. Butlins supplied most of the trophies. A free holiday in Holland, as guests of Addatours, was awarded to the best novice quartet and was won by the *Barrytones* who were also the Bronze Medallists.

After massed singing and a closing address, the delegates made their way home with a final message - to remember to book the date of the next year's convention, in Birmingham, the following September.



We Need a Magazine

In the early months of the Association there was an obvious need for inter-club communication. There were many questions to be answered.

How could they plan for the future? What services should the Association aim to provide for the clubs and their members? What form should the relationship with SPEBSQSA take? Plans for future national barbershop conventions needed to be publicised. Many important issues needed airing and discussing if the Association was to grow numerically, in members and clubs, not to mention musically.

Not an Ideal Arrangement

Fred Williams of the Tyneside Club, Convention Manager of the Association Convention in Newcastle in July 1974, managed to keep the original group of five clubs and their members informed of the forthcoming event without the aid of a national magazine. He and his team accomplished this by post and by telephone but this was not an ideal long-term arrangement.

It is not surprising that at the first Council meeting of the Association on 5 October 1974, (held in the canteen of the Nottingham Thermometer Company), the Secretary Den Tyrell (Brighton) spoke of the possibility of having an Association Magazine.

There was, however, a surprising response to this suggestion. The meeting felt 'this would not be possible at the moment but that a directory-cum-calendar of events would be useful'. It was agreed, though, that club magazines should be exchanged.

At this time the only officials of the Association were the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. It soon became evident that to achieve growth these three would not be able to handle all the administrative tasks.

Appointment of Bulletin Editor

At the next Council meeting on 11 January 1975, Chuck Odom suggested that it was time to elect a full Executive Committee for the day-to-day running of the Association. This was accomplished at the next Council meeting on 19 April 1975 when the Bulletin Editor was included on the team.

The 13 September 1975 meeting was advised that, for economic reasons, no magazine had been produced but that a news sheet would be out soon in the form of a directory.

The First News Sheet

The Association's first News Sheet, of four typewritten sides of A4, was edited and produced not by Vic Nield, the nominated Bulletin Editor, but by Fred Williams (Tyneside). It went out to every member in December 1975. In addition to details of the Association's AGM on 6 March 1976 in Buxton, Derbyshire, there were contributions of news and other items from six clubs, a crossword puzzle and details of a barbershop contest to be run jointly by the Charlie Chester Show and the Lions organisation.

At No Little Cost

A statistic in the newsletter announced that the production and distribution costs would be covered for ten months if every member of the Association bought at least ten Association Christmas Cards. When the Association accounts were presented for the year ended 31 December 1975, the cost of typing, printing and distributing the first issue of the Newsletter amounted to £46.00, which resulted in the Association going into the red. As a consequence the members' subscriptions were increased by 75p per quarter.

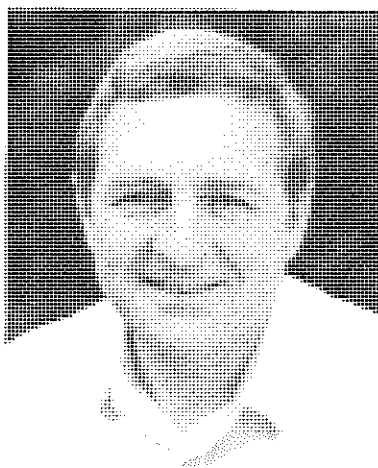
By the time the second edition of the News Sheet, again four sides of A4, was issued in January 1976, the highly successful Brighton Convention was over. The front page was filled with all the contest results. In addition there were details of a tour of the UK by American Barbershop Singers, contributions from ten clubs and the second and last crossword puzzle.

Changes of Editor

The editorial pen was passed to Vic Nield for issue No. 3 in February 1976, when one and a half pages were produced. Issue No. 4 came out in August 1976 with Martin Anderson (Bristol) as the new editor.

Martin edited, produced and distributed the News Sheet every month until December 1979. He celebrated the new decade with the appearance in January 1980 of the first Harmony Express. The new name of the official publication had been selected from a members' title contest. The production bore the badge of the British Association of Barbershoppers. This badge existed until March 1981 when the name was changed to the British Association of Barbershop Singers.

Between August 1976 and 1990, Martin Anderson produced one hundred and sixty-eight editions. As if this was not enough he produced editions of the Convention Express over a number of years up to 1990.



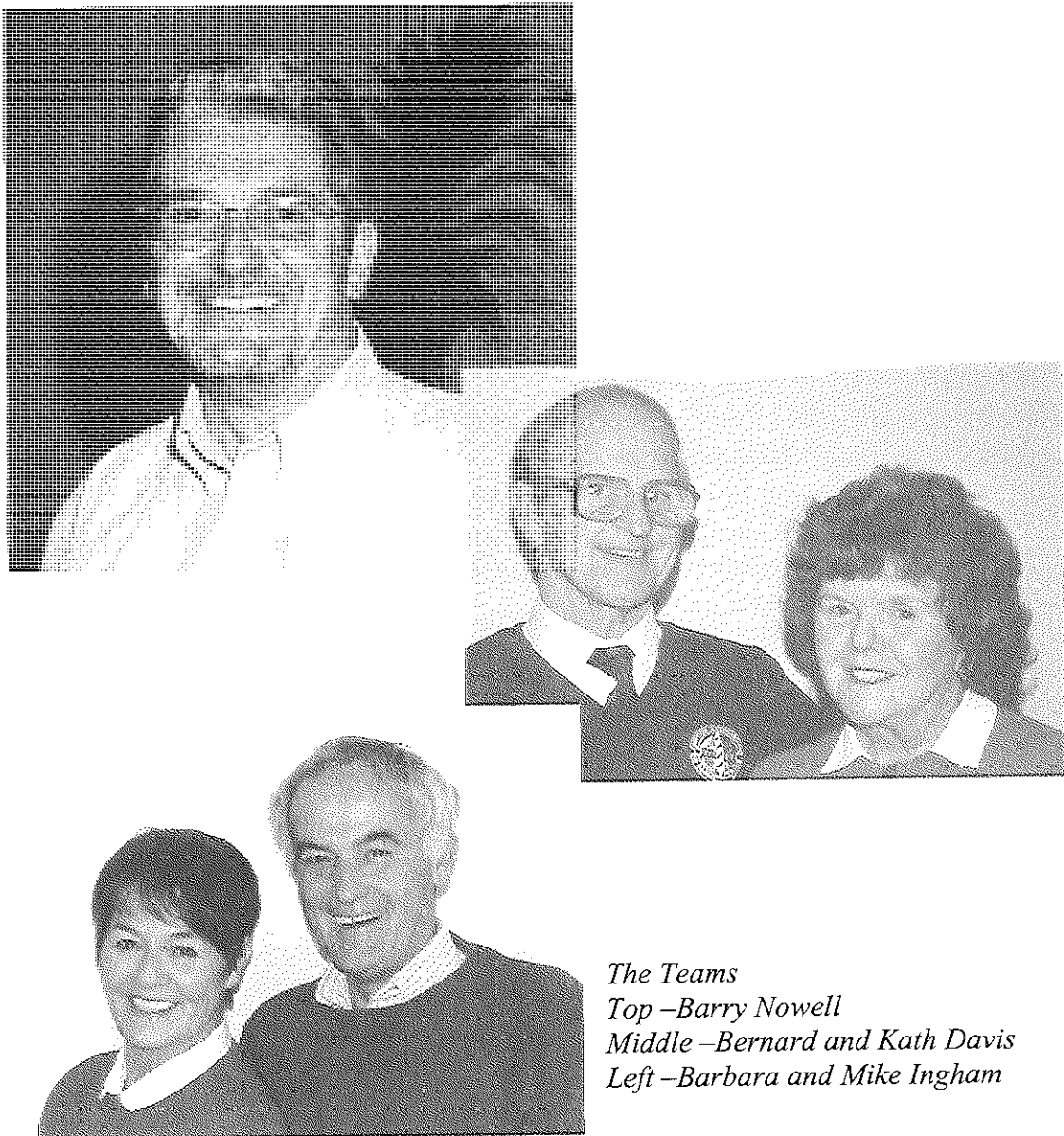
Martin Anderson

Colin Graham (Staines and Mold) took over from Martin in August 1990 and edited and produced seven issues.

A Long Tenure of Office

In 1991 Barry Nowell became editor. Bernard Davis (Preston) and his wife Kath distributed Barry's first issue, the March/April 1991 edition, to around eighteen hundred members in about fifty-five clubs. Bernard and Kath continued to distribute every edition until they handed over this arduous task to Mike and Barbara Ingham also of Preston in January 1999.

Barry Nowell edited and produced twelve issues of Harmony Express each year until it was decided to reduce the editions to eleven in 1984. The January and February publications were produced each year thereafter as a joint issue.



The Teams

Top –Barry Nowell

Middle –Bernard and Kath Davis

Left –Barbara and Mike Ingham

The Music Men



Within months of the formation of the Association, the Executive Committee asked those dealing with music in the founding clubs to set up a Music Sub-committee. They were to elect a temporary chairman and to discuss and bring forward contest rules for consideration.

Bert Grimshaw (C.D. Tyneside Chorus) reported back on the sub-committee's first meeting. At subsequent Council meetings the Music Sub-committee, with Bob Walker as Music Co-ordinator, was asked to consider all musical matters, including judging of contests and arrangements for obtaining music from SPEBSQSA. The main tasks were to set up a judging programme, to recruit and train sufficient judges and to formulate appropriate contest rules. Other proposals and suggestions were that the Music Sub-committee should set up club officer training schools (COTS) workshops, give advice to new quartets and provide learning tapes for standard barbershop songs. A first workshop for Chorus Directors was arranged for 24 April 1976.

Shortly after the Music Committee was set up they expressed the hope that any Association quartet or chorus appearing on TV or radio should give a true image of barbershop. More harm than good would result from a mediocre performance.

Music Co-ordinator

At the AGM in March 1976 Bob Walker was elected as Music Co-ordinator with a seat on the Executive Committee. He requested that the Music Committee be informed when regional contests (Prelims) were to be held so that a Music Committee judge could officiate as chairman of any regional judging panel.

By 1978 the Association had twenty-one registered judges. However, with five contest judging categories, more were needed. Twenty-six choruses had entered for the 1978 national contests and it was decided that to prevent the judges being overloaded with the large number of entries, chorus eliminations should limit the number of competing choruses to sixteen. Byes were awarded to the top six choruses and quartets in the 1976 and 1977 contests and



Bob Walker

the remaining qualifiers were chosen by preliminary contests. Although it was only a temporary measure, the awarding of contest byes was not popular with the membership. Consequently it was decreed that when circumstances permitted, that is as soon as the shortage of judges was solved, no choruses or quartets would be given byes at preliminary contests.

Sponsorship

In April 1978 Council was asked to investigate sponsorship for members to attend the SPEBSQSA Harmony College in the USA. In March 1979 Council agreed that a scholarship fund should be set up for members to attend. In July 1979 the Music Committee advised Council that £200.00 had been budgeted to cover this sponsorship in the current year and it was envisaged that the sum of £400.00 would be budgeted for 1980. The first two scholarships were awarded in 1979. This scholarship scheme developed over the years and later included payment of fees for Association chorus directors to attend Society Directors' Colleges in the USA.

Financial Restraints

The shortage of qualified judges and financial restraints imposed on the judging and education programmes resulted in a decision, following the 1978 Convention, that chorus contests would be discontinued until a sufficient number of judges had been trained. Consequently, no preliminary contests were held in 1979. At the Skegness Convention in October that year novice chorus and octet contests were run for one year only. Music Committee initiatives in 1979 included the formation of the Guild of British Barbershop Judges. At the AGM on 31 March, Council approved the Guild's new contest rules. The Guild organised the Association's first Barbershop College, later to be called Harmony College, at Stockport from 26 to 29 July 1979. From the earliest days of both the Music Committee and the Guild, members of these two bodies made themselves available to give coaching to the Association's quartets and choruses.

Training for Judges

The Guild of Judges set up a Category Specialists Sub-committee in 1979. Each member was responsible for training and assessing candidate judges for five individual judging categories. This sub-committee covered, in addition to the categories judged, the contest auditing and chairmanship of judges.

Applicant judges in the Guild progressed through student to associate membership, then became a Member and finally a Category Specialist, who was a Fellow of the Guild. Judges were promoted on attendance at judge training seminars, on assessment by the relevant category specialist and by their performance at shadow judging of contests. Members of the Guild were all volunteers but the scale of expenses paid by the Association for the frequent training seminars meant most of the costs were borne by the judges themselves. For instance a first time attendance at a seminar received no recompense, a student member received 15%,

an associate member received 50% and a full member could claim 75% of the travel and accommodation costs. It was decided in 1985 that there was no need for the title of Fellow to be continued and the rank was no longer used.

By 1980 the Guild also included in its governing board the positions of Contest Manager, Education Manager, Bulletin Editor and the Social Secretary who was responsible for booking venues for meetings.

Disruption of Official Contests

Further disruption of official contests continued into the 1980 convention. The problem had been exacerbated owing to there being only seven months between the 1979 and 1980 conventions. Preliminary contests, planned for February and March 1980 were cancelled because of further severe financial cuts to the judging and education budgets. There were no finances available to pay judges' preliminary contest expenses. There were large numbers of withdrawals from the contest and a low level of registrations for convention. Apparently the reason for this was that many members were reluctant to register for convention until they were sure their chorus had qualified at the Prelim stage. The May 1980 Birmingham convention contests attracted entries of only fourteen choruses and twenty-three quartets.

More Finance Needed

At the AGM in March 1980, before the budget for the following year was considered, the Music Committee Chairman, Bob Walker, outlined the activities of the Music Committee and the Guild of British Barbershop Judges. He stressed that if the music and judging programmes were to continue, more finances would be needed. This would mean that the members' subscriptions would have to be increased. He advised that judges were leaving the programme because of the personal financial expense involved; if more judges were to leave, the Guild would be unable to function, thus jeopardising the annual convention. In response the members' subscription was increased from £4.00 to £10.00 per annum. The financial situation eased for the judging and educational programmes. From 1977, the Music Committee or the members of the Guild of British Barbershop Judges organised forty-four judging seminars and thirty-three workshops, some specifically for chorus directors and quartets. These were mostly two-day events. The Music Committee and the Guild continued as separate entities from 1979 until 1981.

Music Committee Disbanded

At the September 1981 AGM, the Music Committee Chairman, John Wiggins, recommended that the Music Committee should be disbanded and that the seat on the Executive Committee previously allocated to the Music Committee Chairman should instead be given to an elected Music Services Education Co-ordinator. He went on to propose that the Chairman of the Guild of British Barbershop Judges should be an ex-officio member of the

John Wiggins



Executive Committee. These changes were confirmed and at the 1981 AGM Rod Butcher was elected as Music Services Education Co-ordinator. He and the Guild Chairman Bob Walker took their seats on the Executive Committee.

In 1983 the setting up of a Review Board changed the process of assessing promotions of judges. The following year a popular innovation was

the making of videos of all competing choruses at Prelims with copies being supplied to the contestants.

Publication of Score Sheet

As a means of keeping members of the Music Committee and the judging programme informed a news sheet was initiated in December 1978. This publication transformed into the Guild's *Score Sheet* in April 1983, edited by Tony Golding and there was a monthly page or column in the *Harmony Express* for the next nine months. It became a valuable means of informing the whole membership of matters to do with the judging programme, categories of contest rules and availability of education. It also encouraged feedback from members. The frequency of publication of *Score Sheet* varied over the following years, under the subsequent editorship of Graham Willcocks and Graham Lawrence, sometimes appearing five times a year, sometimes monthly. Even after it ceased to appear, for most of the 1990s, articles by Guild judges continued to appear in *Harmony Express*.

A Challenge for the Guild

Changes in contest rules from time to time imposed extra burdens on both the judges in training and the trainers. The complete revision of the categories in 1991, when the contest rules for the Society and all the affiliate barbershop organisations worldwide were made the same, caused the greatest challenge to the Guild. The judges and the trainers had to be retrained and certified before the new system could be implemented in 1993.

Rules and Judging



Contests have always been an important activity in the world of Barbershop singing both in the Society and the Association. From the Association convention at Newcastle in July 1974, quartets competed for the coveted honour of becoming the national champions. For that first contest, the organisers had several problems as neither contest rules nor judges were readily available.

In the words of the autumn 1974 edition of the Tyneside Club Bulletin *The Singing Hinnie* 'the competition was judged on simplified rules appropriate to the first national competition in the UK but obtaining qualified and unbiased judges native to the UK was not possible. It is the intention to move to SPEBSQSA rules as more experience is gained on and off stage'.

The Categories

Four categories were judged in that first national quartet championship contest. They were: Harmony Accuracy, Balance and Blend, Stage Presence and Arrangement. The panel of five judges were SPEBSQSA members. Two of these, a Canadian and an American, were Society certified judges. The Time Judge and Chairman of Judges were members of the visiting Lima Chorus and the fifth judge was a member of the *Harmony Hounds* quartet.

In September 1975 a decision was taken to ban the use of all photographic and recording equipment by audiences at Association contests.

By the time of the second national convention in Brighton in December 1975, an extra contest was staged, to decide the national Barbershop Chorus Champions. The contest rules were changed and an extra category of Interpretation was judged. The Arrangement Judge was recognised as the guardian of the barbershop style whilst the other four were regarded as judging the levels of performance.

After the first quartet contest, it was decided that champion quartets would not be eligible to compete again with the same name and personnel. A similar rule had been decided by SPEBSQSA years before, following the policy of 'Once a Champion – always a Champion'. As a happy consequence of this rule, the first Association champion quartet, the *Ringleaders* had offered to set up a judging programme. The offer was readily accepted and the quartet became four of the first six UK Quartet Contest judges.

In 1978 it was decided that any chorus winning the national contest two years in succession would be required to stand down from competition for one year. This stand down rule was revised in 1981 so that the winning chorus would be ineligible to compete the

following year and came into effect following the 1982 Convention. In 1997 this rule was changed again when winning choruses were required to stand down for two years.

Critiques

Quartet members and chorus representatives had always benefited from critiques given by judges after the contests. These gave contestants detailed assessment of their performances and allowed the singers to question the judges. In later years these critiques were re-named Analysis and Recommendation (A and R's) and in 1993 became known as Evaluations.

Generally, critiques were available to contestants at preliminary contests only, in view of time limitations at conventions, but eventually each competing quartet and chorus was supplied with a videotape and audio tape recording of their performance in the convention contests.

Revision of Rules

According to the affiliation agreement with SPEBSQSA, the Association's contest rules and judging procedures were required to comply with those of the Society. It was not until 1981 that this happened. Harmony Accuracy and Balance and Blend were combined to create the new Sound category.

In 1991 SPEBSQSA set up plans to carry out a complete revision of the contest rules and convened a meeting the day before the 1992 Harmony College at St. Joseph, Missouri. Representatives of all the Society Affiliates were invited. During this meeting, category specialists explained the philosophy behind the recommended new categories of Singing, Music and Presentation. Discussions were held on the proposed changes and the affiliated representatives were given the opportunity to contribute opinions and ask questions. There was considerable interest in the concept of common ground in the proposed new rules. This was described as the area where all three of the categories overlapped. This new concept allowed the judges of each of the three categories to award marks in this Common Ground.

The Society's Executive Committee and International Board provisionally approved the rules at the Mid-Winter Convention in Corpus Christi in January 1993. Intensive programmes were necessary for new judge training and certification, for the Society and all the Affiliates. The new rules were applied by BABS for the first time at the November 1993 Prelims at Brighton and Sheffield.

The rule changes included removal of some restrictions. One of these allowed contestants to sing as they entered or exited from the stage whereas previously all contestants had to remain silent as they arrived or departed. Contestants still had to sing two different songs at each stage of competition. The rule on length of singing time was dropped by the Society but BABS rules included a maximum time on stage of eight minutes for quartets and ten minutes for choruses. This latter rule was also dropped two years later.

Unifying Judging Systems

The proposed new US Category Directors came to judging seminars in Britain to explain the changes and start to train the BABS judges. The UK Category Directors attended the Society judge training programmes in the USA and those who were members of SPEBSQSA arranged to judge in contests in America. An assessment by the Guild of Judges after the first year of these categories being used in UK competitions was distinctly encouraging. The intention at the outset had been to unify the judging systems to become the worldwide basis for all barbershop competitions.

Although not quite identical, there was now a consensus between the two systems of judge training and scoring in the UK and the USA. There was also consistency between the judges themselves and between Association and Society judges. Nevertheless there was still sufficient allowance in the scoring of the new categories for judges to respond individually to artistry in performance as well as the more objective and technical aspects of performance.



SPEBSQSA Contests

For some years prior to 1985, the BABS Gold Medal quartets had been invited to appear and sing at the Society Mid-Winter Convention, usually held in January or February. Several British Champion quartets had accepted the invitation, which was one of the conditions of the Affiliation Agreement between BABS and SPEBSQSA signed in December 1975 at the Brighton Convention.

At that time no contests were held at Mid-Winter Convention. This changed in January 1986 when the Seniors' Quartet Championships were inaugurated and for the first time contests were staged at the event.

In January 1983 BABS had officially petitioned the Society for Association champion quartets to be invited to compete in the quartet contests at the SPEBSQSA International Conventions; the response by the Society was that the whole affiliation agreement would be reconsidered.

Quartets Competing at International Level

At its Mid-Winter Convention in San Antonio in January 1985, the Society Executive Committee and International Board of Directors decided to invite two affiliates, BABS and SNOBS, to send one quartet each to compete at future International Conventions commencing with the Salt Lake City Convention in July 1986.

The following BABS Champion Quartets competed at International Conventions from 1986 until 1989:

	Year	Quartet	Placed
Salt Lake City	1986	Gilt Edge	48/50
Hartford	1987	Junction 33	42/49
San Antonio	1988	Times Square	49/51
Kansas City	1989	High Time	32/51

Chorus Participation

In 1989, SPEBSQSA agreed that 'as BABS is equivalent to a District of the Society the Association is entitled to send two quartets to compete at International Conventions'.

In the same year BABS applied to the Society for the BABS champion chorus to be allowed to compete at future International Conventions. In his response, Society Executive Director Joe Liles agreed that two quartets plus one chorus from BABS should be invited to compete at the San Francisco Convention in 1990. He also suggested that the BABS champion quartet and chorus for a given year could represent the Association at International the following year, so giving them the time to raise the money needed to make the trip. The process to be applied in selecting the second representative quartet was left for BABS to decide.

The following BABS quartets and choruses competed from 1990:

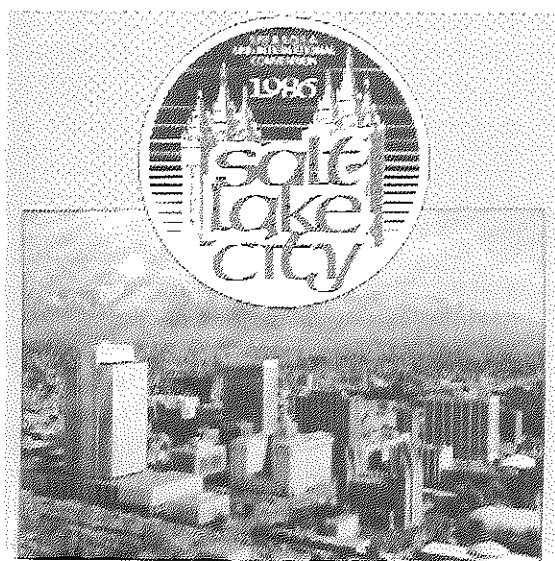
Year	Quartet	Place	Chorus	Place
1990	*Quartz Precision	22/51	Hallmark of Harmony	14/17
San Francisco				
1991	*Curtain Call	36/65		
Louisville				
1992	Quartz Precision	22/55	Hallmark of Harmony	17/20
New Orleans	By Appointment	52/55		
1993	Quattro	52/53		
Calgary	Harmonix	30/53		
1994	Island Engagement	41/53	Grand Central Chorus	18/20
Pittsburgh	Harmonix	52/53		
1995	Sound Assembly	22/56	Hallmark of Harmony	19/22
Greater Miami				
1996	Harmonix	41/48	Shannon Express	18/22
Salt Lake City	Nickleodeon	45/48		
1997	Hooked on Harmony	40/43		
Indianapolis				
1998	Cambridge Blues	48/49	Grand Central Chorus	20/21
Atlanta				
1999	Chordial Exchange	43/43	#Thames Valley Chorus	21/23
Anaheim				

*Delays in finalising procedure and rules for selecting the second representative quartet resulted in only one quartet representing BABS at the International Conventions in 1990 and 1991.

#Thames Valley Chorus (BABS 1998 third placed chorus) competed instead of the Champion chorus which was unable to make the trip.

The following BABS Champion Seniors' Quartets qualified to compete in the SPEBSQSA International Seniors' Quartet Contests at Mid-Winter Conventions:

	Year	Quartet	Placed
Jacksonville	1996 (Feb)	Fortunairs	4/22
Sacramento	1997 (Jan)	Southern Tradition	10/23





Raising the Standards

If recordings of quartets and choruses in the early days of the Association are compared with those of later years it becomes obvious that the standards in every aspect of barbershop singing have improved beyond all recognition. Competition at quartet and chorus contests at the annual national conventions has had a significant effect on the levels of musicianship and performance. Other influences have also raised the standards. Exposure of the members to quality exponents of the barbershop style, namely the visits of champion and other top ranking Society quartets and choruses must surely have been a factor.

Major Influences

Educational initiatives such as seminars, coaching and harmony workshops set up by dedicated members of the Association were major influences. The establishment of an annual weekend Harmony College brought together a wealth of knowledge and musical talent that already existed in the Association. Furthermore, these weekends made it possible for members to benefit from top musical educators from SPEBSQSA. The combination of all these added to the impetus provided by annual competition have taken the quality of British barbershop to near professional standards unusual in amateur musical organisations.

Harmony Education Programmes

For the first three years after the formation of the Association the range of educational provision was generally limited to training contest judges and occasional News Sheet articles explaining the categories and developing rules of quartet and chorus contests. However, by May 1977, Bob Walker, Chairman of the Music Committee, planned a series of Coaching and Directors' Workshops. Also planned was a General Barbershop Education Weekend to be held on 7 and 8 January 1978, covering barbershop craft, coaching, directing, arranging and voice training.

The Education Weekend took place at Weston-super-Mare and was the first educational event aimed at the membership at large. General barbershop education was combined with a Judging Seminar. In the event, the programme for the weekend proved to be too crowded for the Category Specialists who had to run their Category sessions and also organise some of the coaching and directing classes. A successful Tag Singing Contest in Nottingham at the Quartet Coaching Seminar the year before had attracted twenty-five entries. This popular contest was repeated at Weston, with thirty quartets entering.

Harmony Colleges

The first Association Barbershop College (later known as Harmony College) was held at Owens Park, part of the Manchester University campus, from 9.30am Thursday 26 July 1979 until 12.45pm Sunday 29 July 1979. One hundred and ten barbershop students attended. The total cost to the students, including accommodation and all meals was £40.00 per member. During three and a half days twenty different sessions, with up to three classes running concurrently, covered a wide range of barbershop topics. The College was planned and organised by Bob Walker, Music Committee Chairman and Roy Dawson, (Stockport), a member of the Music Committee. The faculty for the College included Ron Avis, Frank Burrows, Jonathan Hershman, Lyle Pettigrew (Ontario District SPEBSQSA), Val Hicks (Far Western District SPEBSQSA) and Roy Dawson while Malcolm Oldham liaised with the University. Assisting with the classes were John Beck and other members of the Guild of Judges.

The Saturday evening entertainment started with the *Thursdayaires Chorus* followed by various quartets and Roy Dawson on ukulele, accompanied by Michael Sides on piano giving a very polished rendition of a couple of George Formby songs.

The general pattern was set for future Harmony Colleges. For the next two years these were organised and run at Liverpool University by the Chairmen of the Music Committee, John Beck in 1980 and John Wiggins in 1981. The duration of the colleges was reduced, classes commencing on Friday morning and ending as before around midday Sunday. The 1981 College, however, ended at 11.00am on Sunday. The Association AGM followed it immediately, perhaps a neat way of assuring a good attendance by club representatives.

As part of the Affiliation agreement with SPEBSQSA the Society Educator provided in 1981 was Joe Liles, at that time Society Assistant Director of Music services. Joe was promoted to Director in 1982 and in 1988, appointed Executive Director of SPEBSQSA. After the 1981 College, the first of his many welcome visits to BABS events, Joe Liles embarked on a hectic programme of teach-ins at six clubs, including a two-day series of classes on arranging. At Harmony College in 1989, Joe Liles was made an Honorary Life member of BABS.

Joe Liles Scholarship

Awarded by BABS as a permanent means of recognising Joe Liles' services to barbershop, in particular his support for the Association, this scholarship was



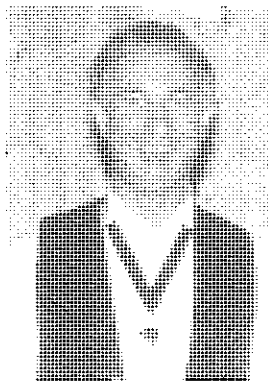
Joe Liles

for a free student place at the Association Harmony College, excluding the cost of transport.

Applicants for the scholarship must be members of BABS and must be proposed by a senior member of a chorus or in the educational establishment of BABS. Financed entirely from Association funds, the award of one place per year is decided by the Education and Music Services Director and some preference is given to members who have only recently joined their club.

Inaugurated at Harmony College in 1997, the first scholarship was awarded to Peter Wills of the Blackpool and Fylde Club. No application was received in 1999.

Rod Butcher



Rod Butcher

In 1982 the Music Committee was disbanded and the position of Music Services and Education Co-ordinator was created; Rod Butcher was elected to the post with the responsibility of organising Harmony College, which he did successfully for the next eleven years at the Walsall College of the University of Wolverhampton. The Society Educator at the first Harmony College held at Walsall College in 1982 was Dr. Bob Johnson. When he attended the BABS AGM several days later he was made an Honorary Life Member of BABS in recognition of his service and generous help in the development of the Association.

Graham Starkie

In 1993 Graham Starkie, Director of Music Services, took on the task of running Harmony College based for the last time in the



Graham Starkie

Walsall Campus when student numbers had to be limited to two hundred and fifty. The following year it was decided to transfer to the larger Telford Campus of Wolverhampton University. Streaming of courses was offered to suit the individual needs of the members; a Training Chorus was set up and for the first time singers from Europe and members of non-BABS clubs were invited to attend. One result of the change from Walsall College to Telford College caused great sadness to many of the students, who had for many years enjoyed the annual thrill of singing in a big chorus. Due to insufficient riser space, the era of the traditional *Thursdayaires Chorus* came to an end.

The College was again based at Telford in 1995 when, in addition to the Society educator Dan Naumann, a professional

specialist voice educator, Rick Holloway, made a great impression when he addressed the students in a general session.

On the Move Again

On the move again in 1996, Harmony College was transferred to Worcester College of Higher Education where it has been held ever since. The following year, the Training Chorus was renamed the College Chorus and an even greater variety of *Pick 'n Mix* subjects were on offer. The most significant innovation, however, was the introduction of more professionals to the faculty. In addition to Society Educator Gary Stamm were Paul Farrington, a voice specialist and Nicholas Bannan, a composer and singer with wide experience in choral



Burt Szabo at a Harmony College session. 1985

work. Two more specialists on the faculty, friends of BABS for many years, were *Club-at-Large* member Mike Ford, ex- TV producer at BBC Pebble Mill, and Norman McLeod passing on their expertise on microphone and audio systems.

Barbershop Club Management

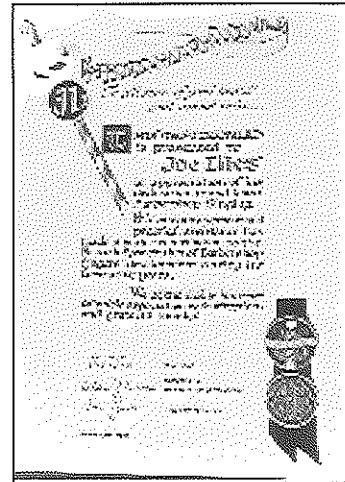
Whilst most educational programmes were music based it was decided in 1985 to attempt to raise the standards of organisation and running of some BABS clubs. The initial plan was to approach some smaller clubs and ask if they would welcome support and advice from selected experienced members of successful larger clubs. A number of these men were recruited, given the title Area Advisers or Counsellors, detailed to serve several clubs, on request, in their local area within about one hours drive from their home.

Club Officers Training School

That scheme commenced in 1986, but in view of reluctance of clubs to take advantage of what was on offer, it was dropped. A more pro-active scheme replaced it. Club Officers Training School (COTS) was proposed and a working party of Bob Walker, Martin Hill and Alan Johnson made plans for the first COTS course, which ran at Warwick University on 26 and 27 September 1987. This course, attracting an attendance of sixty members, covered specialisms for chairman, secretary, membership secretary, treasurer, PRO, chorus manager, programme secretary and music team leader. Naturally, after classes there was an afterglow. By chance, the Burma Star Association members and wives, also accommodated on the Campus, were holding a Reunion Conference Ball on the Saturday evening. Their organisers asked if

the COTS group could provide some entertainment; easily persuaded, a sixty-man chorus from twenty-two clubs sang a twenty-five minute programme with a different CD for each song. The group were thanked profusely with the comment that 'You sing our kind of music' and an official letter of thanks was received soon after. The members pronounced this COTS course a great success and several spin-offs followed with seminars on various subjects, particularly by BABS PRO Geoff Howe, throughout the UK over many months.

*The Joe Liles
Testimonial
presented to
commemorate
his Honorary
Membership of the
Association
1989*



Field Services Officer



Steve Hall

After an initial trial period Steve Hall (Bradford) was appointed as BABS Field Services Officer (Music) in 1991. In the first year, nine clubs had signed up for assistance and within four years over half of the clubs in BABS were in the scheme. Steve visited clubs far and wide, bringing with him his blend of analysis and encouragement.

At a rehearsal following one of Steve's visits, many a chorus director was heard to mutter, 'If you can do it for Steve Hall, you can do it for me'.

Administrative Development

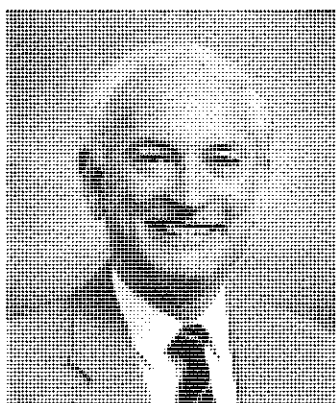


When the Association was founded on 16 February 1974, Don Amos (Crawley) was chosen by the representatives of the original clubs to chair the meeting and Eric Evans (Crawley) took the minutes. At the next meeting an Executive Committee was elected comprising President, Harry Danser, Chairman Don Amos, Secretary Den Tyrell (Brighton & Hove) and Treasurer David Logan Wood (Tyneside).

It was decided that the Association should be governed by a Council representing the registered clubs and that the day-to-day running would be by the elected officers of an executive committee.

The number of clubs had grown to ten by the time of the Council meeting on 5 October 1974 and at its next meeting on 11 January 1975, it was reported that there were then twelve registered clubs with three hundred and forty-eight members. Although this was welcome news, it was obvious that the Executive Committee would have to be enlarged to handle the increased administrative workload. At a meeting held on 19 April 1975, new posts of Membership Secretary and Bulletin Editor were filled by Barry Devlin (Colchester) and Vic Nield (Stockport) respectively.

At the same meeting three other posts were created. Gerry Holland (Reading) immediately took on the post of Public Relations Officer. Music Co-ordinator Bob Walker (Crawley) and Convention Co-ordinator Fred Williams (Tyneside) were appointed at the June 1975 meeting.



Gerry Holland

Administrative Expenditure

Administrative expenditure was, of necessity, kept to a minimum bearing in mind that for the first two years the annual subscription per member was only £1.00 with a registration fee from new clubs of £1.00 per club. Registered clubs were to collect £1.00 per member, to be paid to the Association at the time of the annual convention. This was to cover the affiliation fees payable by the Association to SPEBSQSA. During these early days items of expenditure included setting up a judging programme. The figure

of £60.00 is shown in the accounts 1 September 1974 to 31 December 1975 for judge training, production of an Association badge logo and meetings expenses. The figure also had to cover any convention losses. A valuable source of income at the time was the sale of the Association's own Christmas cards. The Executive Committee readily accepted the offer of the use of the Crawley Club's duplicator at any time.

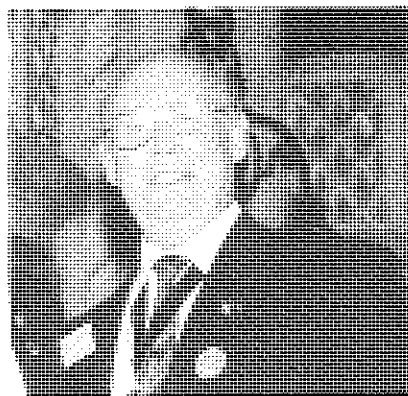
In June 1975 the Membership Secretary issued every member with a membership card and certificate of membership showing his Association membership number and club. A batch of low numbers was specially reserved for members who were considered to have given valuable service to the Association.

In January 1976 Council decided that, in order to achieve continuity, a vice chairman, who would automatically become Chairman-designate the following year would be elected to serve on the Executive Committee and that the immediate past chairman would be an ex-officio member of the committee for the year following his chairmanship.

First Annual General Meeting

At the Association's first Annual General Meeting on 6 March 1976 members heard a recorded message from the Association's first President, Harry Danser, who was too ill to attend. In his

message Harry extended a warm welcome to all his barbershop friends and said how proud he was at the progress of the Association and the increasing number of clubs joining. Harry also took the opportunity to pay a tribute to all the efforts of Chairman Don Amos in his work on behalf of the Association.



Don Amos

In March 1976, there were twenty-seven registered clubs and a total membership of six hundred and twenty-one. It was decided to split the Association into six regions in England and one each in Scotland and Wales. The clubs in each region elected the regional representatives.

Discussions were also held to consider future organisation and the possibility of amalgamating with the eight ladies' clubs. By mutual agreement with the ladies' representatives, however, it was decided it would be better if there were two separate organisations with a central liaison committee.

Club-at-Large

In 1976 a class of membership was proposed for men who wished to belong to the Association but who were unable to join a local club. Two names for this class of membership were discussed, Out-of-Town and Club-at-Large. In the event, Club-at-Large was inaugurated in December 1977. The subscription would be the same as that paid by registered club members. Club-at-Large

members would have no voting rights in Council and would not be allowed to compete in the Association chorus or quartet contests. They would be supplied with the News Sheet every month. At this same meeting the subscription rate was increased to 75p per quarter and the club registration fee went up to £5.00.

Supplies Officer

By 1977 the growth in membership and clubs had increased the demand for music, recordings, pitchpipes and barbershop goods of every kind. It was clearly necessary to make someone responsible for ordering the required items from SPEBSQSA and elsewhere. Don Amos, having just been succeeded by Gerry Holland as Chairman, took on the post of Supplies Officer. This was an executive post as was the position of Ladies Liaison Officer (Barry Devlin).

The functions of the Regional Representatives were still under consideration in 1977 and it was forecast, wrongly as it happened, that 'the Executive may eventually consist of these regional representatives with the appropriate experts for the technical jobs'.

An idea was put forward, later in 1977, to establish a Technical Director intended to manage and train teams of specialists to give advice and assistance to new and struggling clubs. Although Bob Walker was officially appointed to this new post he later expressed the opinion that the job was already adequately covered by the activities of the Music Committee and so the post was abandoned. Ten years later, when club officer training schools and area counsellor schemes were set up, similar aims and objectives were being applied to give assistance and advice to clubs.

In May 1977 arrangements were made to have all members of the Association clubs between the ages of sixteen and seventy covered by insurance whilst taking part in any activities organised by their club, including travel to and from events.

In July 1977 a proposal for proportional representation at Council meetings was rejected as 'it would be too difficult to implement'. However, this was put into operation some years later when club representatives were allocated one vote for each eight members of the club. At this meeting the annual subscription was increased to £4.00 per member.

At the AGM of March 1979 Don Amos was elected to the post of Life President with a seat on the Executive Committee.

In 1981 the Music Committee was disbanded and the Chairman of the Guild of Judges replaced the ex-chairman of the Music Committee on the Executive Committee.

A Code of Ethics, very similar to the Society Code, was adopted for BABS in March 1984.

The New Executive Structure

In 1987, at the AGM, it was agreed that the Executive Committee was becoming too large resulting in its meetings being excessively long. The membership of the 1988 Executive Committee

comprised: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Immediate Past Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, P.R.O., Supplies Officer, Music Services & Education Co-ordinator, Harmony Express Editor, Chairman of the Guild of Judges, 1988 Convention Manager, 1989 Convention Manager, Quartet Tours Co-ordinator, Hon. Life President and a co-opted Membership Development Officer.

A long term working party comprising Life President Don Amos, Chairman Peter May (Guildford), ex-Chairman Gerry Holland (Reading), ex-Guild Chairman Tony Searle (Chesham) and Martin Hill (Sec & P.R.O. Sheffield) was set up in 1987 to plan the future of the Association. The group produced a number of interim plans and at the AGM in September 1989 a new Executive Committee was elected: Chairman Phil Jones (West London), Vice Chairman Bob Walker, Director of Administration Chas Owen (Chesham), Director of Finance Neil Sparkes (Greater Manchester), Director of Membership Development Alan Johnson (Wearside), Director of Music Services Graham Starkie (Reading), Director of Special Events Trevor James (Sheffield), Public Relations Officer Geoff Howe (Leicester) and the Honorary Life President Don Amos.

A proposal first made in 1985, that the terms of office for the Chairman and Vice Chairman should be increased to two years, was eventually implemented in 1989.

In 1994 the Executive Committee proposed to Council that a new post of Director of Marketing be created on the Executive Committee. The aim of this post are to ensure that the Association keeps its focus on organising a set of appropriate activities and provide the means for the continuity and development of the hobby. Laurie Whittle (Mold) was elected to the post at the 1994 AGM.

In the same year, an Affinity Credit Card was launched for the Association by MBNA with the benefits that BABS would receive £1.00 for each card issued, plus £3.00 each year the card remains in use, together with 0.15% of each purchase made with the card.

Associate Membership

July 1999 saw the launch of Associate Membership of BABS; this class of membership absorbed the *Club-at-Large* membership and was open to the general public and non-BABS Clubs. Associate Members would receive copies of Harmony Express and access to Harmony College and Conventions.

Changing the Status of the Association

The status of the Association from the beginning was of a non-profit making unincorporated association. This status allowed flexibility in its structure and procedures but there were some inherent dangers.

As early as October 1976 consideration had been given to the idea of applying for BABS to have charitable status. To facilitate this the Association would first have to become a

company limited by guarantee. This was considered an end in itself as the Executive Committee were becoming concerned over their personal liability if financial losses were incurred. The Association in its original status was not legally empowered to make contracts for projects such as conventions. This meant that a debt could become a personal responsibility of members of the Executive Committee. A decision was taken in 1977 to register BABS as a company but for some reason the decision was rescinded in 1978.

In 1997 Director of Administration, Eddie Kidby researched the pros and cons of BABS becoming a company limited by guarantee and the advantages and disadvantages of charitable status. The conclusion drawn was that the benefits would be largely financial but there could also be a major advancement of the Association's standing in the mainstream of the country's music. At the next AGM in September 1998 it was agreed to proceed with the proposal.

A special general meeting was called on 10 January 1999 to rewrite the Association Constitution in compliance with the Companies Acts. Only twenty of the fifty-six BABS clubs were represented at the meeting. The opportunity was taken to amend clauses of the Constitution unconnected with Companies Acts requirements.

Rights of the new class of Associate Members to compete in Association quartet contests were discussed and the rule agreed that 'up to two Associate Members from categories one and two of Associate Member Clubs may sing in a quartet competition provided they have each paid the Full Member Annual Subscription at least six months prior to the competition'.

Another significant amendment overturned the existing rule preventing Executive Committee members from holding the same office for more than five years.

On 2 August 1999, as a result of a lot of effort and hard work put in by Eddie Kidby, BABS became a registered company limited by guarantee.



The Multi-Club Chorus Phenomenon

For some, singing with just one chorus is not enough; they join with members of other barbershop clubs, work on a new repertoire of songs and become part of a new chorus. Usually, but not always, a trip abroad with the new chorus is the common goal involving the expense of new stage and walkout uniforms, periodic chorus rehearsals at a distant venue, travel and accommodation abroad. To many, the opportunity to sing in a big chorus of enthusiastic and committed singers is the major attraction making it all worthwhile.

An Opportunity for Northern Clubs

England's *Northernaires* trip to Canada came about as a result of an idea first dreamed up in 1979 by two brothers, Jack Hall, then President of the Brampton Chapter in Ontario and Harry Hall, a member of Leeds Barbershop Harmony Club. Leeds club had been invited to open the Ontario Fall Convention in October 1981. However, the chorus needed to be forty strong and as this number was not attainable by the Leeds club alone it was decided to offer members of other northern clubs the opportunity to participate. The response was overwhelming and soon a committed chorus of eighty-one members from Blackpool, Greater Manchester, Hartlepool, Leicester, Liverpool, Merseyside, Preston, Sheffield, Stockport, Tyneside, Wearside, Leeds and one member from Bristol, had formed. With John Batty and Gerry Ryan as MD's the group began to meet for monthly Sunday practices from 10.00am until 4.00pm, in Leeds.

On 10 October 1981 a party of one hundred and thirty, made up of the chorus, wives and friends and LABBS Gold Medallist quartet *Conchords*, flew to Toronto for the twelve-day trip to be hosted by the Mississauga Chapter members.

At the Ontario District Convention the group were welcomed by Hugh Ingraham, SPEBSQSA Executive Director, and the *Northernaires* were generously offered the opportunity to sing and be judged in the District Chorus competition. The *Entertainers* chorus of the Oakland Chapter were worthy winners but out of eleven actual competing choruses the visitors would have come a creditable third on Sound and fifth in overall placing from the marks they scored.

In addition to the usual sightseeing trips, the group visited five chapters in the Toronto area making a host of friends in the process.

The Next Thirteen Years

At the outset the *Northernaires* trip to Canada was to be a one-off project but some of the original group decided to keep the chorus going. Over the next thirteen years there followed a series of tours abroad and in Britain all led and organised by Bill Thomas of Bradford.

Between October 1983 and September 1994 the *Northernaires* went four times to Holland and visited Germany and Belgium; in 1990 and 1991 trips were made to Isle of Wight and Aberdeen respectively and later to Spain and the Society Calgary Convention in 1993. One of many memorable occasions, during the visit to Germany in 1994, was when the *Northernaires* sang *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* in Cologne Cathedral.

However, their so-called *Texas Invasion* trip to the San Antonio International Convention in 1988 celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of SPEBSQSA was probably the highlight for the members. The *Northernaires* were the first British chorus to sing on the inaugural World Jamboree Concert. Their package included barbershop arrangements of *There'll Always Be an England* and a medley of other English songs under the direction of Mick Barnacle (Leicester) and Frank Crockley (Middlesbrough). As a finale, under the direction of Dr. Bob Johnson, the *Northernaires* sang Joe Liles' arrangement of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* as part of a five hundred-voice chorus.

The desire to form more hybrid choruses spread to other regions and examples of these are *Southern Sound* (1985), the *Pensionaires* formed out of the *Northernaires* (1985), *Daytones* (1992) a group who meet and perform in the daytime only, *Harmony Southwest* (1993), *Westernaires* (1993), *Northwest Harmony* (1998), *Harmony UK* (1998) and *Gentlemen Songsters* (1999).

The Ultimate Hybrid Chorus

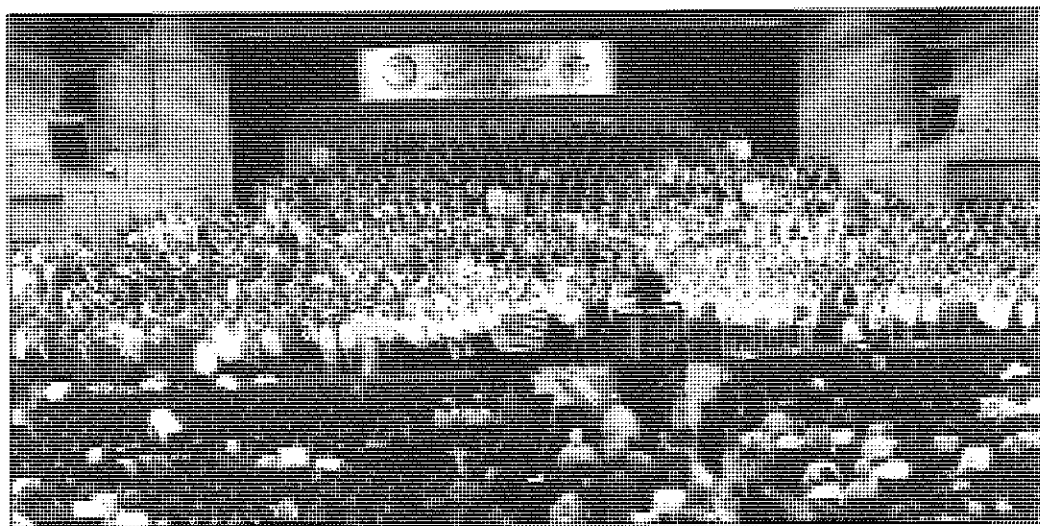
Perhaps the ultimate in multi-club (and chapter) choruses, which formed, rehearsed, performed and disbanded all in the space of an hour or so, was the *World's Biggest Barbershop Chorus*. Approximately seven hundred and fifty voices, directed by Dr. Bob Johnson, sang at the Bournemouth Convention on 2 May 1987. The occasion was recorded on cassette – *I Was There*. This chorus was the brainchild of Gerry Holland the Convention Manager who stage-managed the whole event.

Ian Stone undertook the daunting task of preparing and supervising the assembly and setting up of thirteen steps of risers for the chorus. He enlisted the help of the singers to arrange six steps on the floor and seven on the stage of the Windsor Hall in the Bournemouth Centre. The operation was accomplished smoothly in about thirty minutes after the chorus contest.

On hearing the tune-up Dr. Bob on his 'cherry picker' podium (supplied free of charge by Bournemouth Council), commented 'God, you're beautiful!' His major concern when directing *Let's Get Together Again* near the end of the performance

was for safety, when he pleaded with the singers NOT to sway during the closing lines of the song. Gerry Holland reckoned his best moment came when, during *Give Me That Barbershop Style*, he managed to get to the end of the 'talking' exactly when the 'looting' finished and admitted to having had nightmares about achieving it.

The whole exercise was repeated at the 1989 Convention at the same venue. The title of this group was *The World's Largest Barbershop Chorus*, and the singers came from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Holland, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Sweden, USA, West Germany and UK. Once again Dr. Johnson directed and Ian Stone and his team repeated the magic with the risers. Although it was impossible to count the actual number of singers it was estimated that they numbered over one thousand. Anyone with good eyesight may check out the photograph that was reprinted on the front cover of the July/August 1989 edition of SPEBSQSA's *Harmonizer*.



The World's Largest Barbershop Chorus at the Association Annual Convention Bournemouth, May 1989, directed by Dr Bob Johnson

The BABS Plastic Medal Chorus

One of the most popular and lamented multi-club choruses was the *Thursdayaires*. This chorus existed only for the duration of a Harmony College weekend. Membership was restricted to a select band that arrived at the college on Thursday evening before the official College courses commenced. The first *Thursdayaires*, nicknamed the *BABS Plastic Medal Chorus*, was formed in 1979 at the first Barbershop College in Owens Park, Manchester University. At subsequent Harmony Colleges over the next fourteen years membership of the *Thursdayaires* swelled until eventually it comprised nearly all those attending the college.

During the weekend Jonathan Hershman would supervise a hilarious choreographed comedy production based on the college song, complete with a costumed front line group, which would invariably include the Society Educator for the College. After a few rehearsals slotted into the College programme during Friday and Saturday the chorus performed as the finale on the Saturday night show. The audience was the rest of the Harmony College student body and invited guests. The chorus always repeated its complete package as an encore. Traditionally the finale always included a custard pie episode among the front line performers and the Educator was inevitably the recipient of a custard pie. As the members of the chorus filed off stage they were presented with their coveted *Thursdayaires* plastic badge.



25th Anniversary Convention

In the early 1980's BABS conventions based at Warwick University were very popular with many members mainly because the campus facilities of accommodation, cafeteria catering and the auditorium were all in close proximity. Consequently there was no need for large changing rooms, transport to and from the contests or clubs needing to provide for their own accommodation.

Over the years British conventions had grown in content and complexity. Contests and shows, delegate numbers and groups of visitors attending from our overseas affiliates had increased and demands on facilities at venues had expanded. University venues became unsuitable for the simple reason that none were large enough for our requirements. However, there were few other venues in Britain with the necessary resources.

Conventions now needed a venue having an auditorium with good acoustics, capable of seating audiences of over three thousand, ample facilities for changing and warm-up rooms for hundreds of chorus members, quartet contestants and artistes (one thousand three hundred in 1999). There had to be plenty of not-too-distant reasonably priced hotel accommodation and adequate transport facilities capable of moving large numbers of delegates to and from hotels in the relatively brief intervals between contests and shows and late at night.

Most host cities welcome BABS conventions, especially the hotels and restaurants, not least because the local economy can benefit from the often £1m expended by delegates. However, the suitable but scarce venues have to be sought and booked by the future Convention Manager several years in advance.

Blackpool Chosen

By spring 1997 the nucleus of the Silver Jubilee Convention Team, which eventually numbered thirty-two, under Gerry Holland as manager, had already started to plan the event at Blackpool to take place over the weekend of 30 April to 2 May 1999.

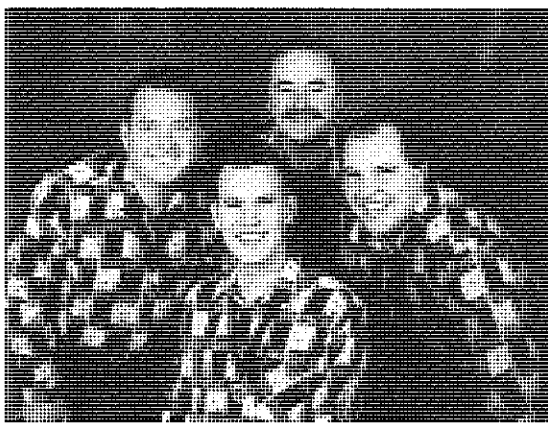
In 1997 it had been decided that, to mark the Silver Jubilee of the Association, preliminary elimination contests in the autumn of 1998 would be held for quartets only. Thus, for 1999 only, every BABS chorus would be eligible to enter the chorus contest. This resulted in a record entry of thirty-nine choruses. A number of these choruses were to appear on the convention stage for the first time in their history. With two mike-warming choruses and one mike-cooling chorus the record-breaking contest commenced at

9.50am and ended around 6.00pm, a virtual marathon for the sixteen judges. With so many choruses competing the convention attracted a larger than usual number of club supporters and helped make the event one of the biggest and, incidentally, one of the most profitable conventions for years.

The choice of venue, which proved excellent, was Blackpool Wintergardens where the Opera House was ideal for the contests and show. The Empress Ballroom was available for use as a huge changing room with various spacious rooms for warm-ups and afterglows all under the same roof. Throughout the weekend a free and frequent bus service was in operation taking delegates between hotels and the contests and shows.

Contest Winners

The winners of the 1999 Jubilee Quartet Contest were *Shockwave* of Potton & Selby. Silver medallists were *By Appointment* of Bournemouth and East Dorset and *The Likely Lads* of Leeds and Bradford took the bronze medal. The



Shockwave

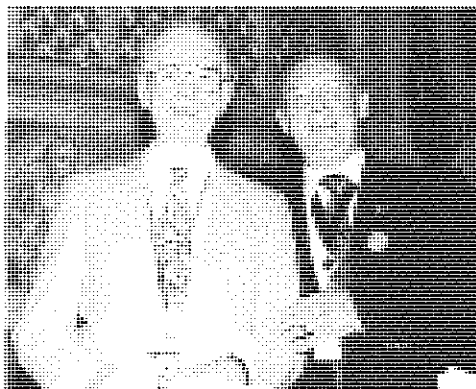
Seniors' Quartet Champions were *Take Note* from Kingsbridge.

Cambridge Chord Company directed by Paul Davies were chorus champions. *Hallmark of Harmony* under Steve Holden took second place and the third placed chorus was *Grand Central Chorus* led by Mark Burnip.

Immediately after the quartet contest finals the quartet and chorus medals and trophies were presented to the winning contestants in the crowded auditorium.

Medal Presentations

Later, at the Chairmen's Reception before invited guests and club chairmen, presentations of medals were made to all BABS Past Chairmen. Twenty founder members of BABS were also honoured and awarded a distinctive Founders' Pin and a Twenty Five Year Member's Pin.



Eric Evans (l) receives his pin from Don Amos

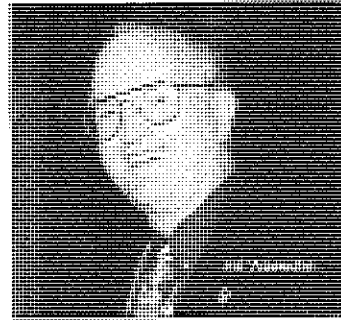
The following members received a Founder's Pin.

<i>Founder Member</i>	<i>Original Club</i>
Don Amos	Crawley
Ron Avis	Crawley
Colin Barnaby	Crawley
Fred Barnard*	Brighton and Hove
Bob Beckford	Crawley
Dick Beckford	Crawley
John Danser	Crawley
Tony Danser*	Crawley
Eric Evans	Crawley
Gerry Holland	Reading
Alan Johnson	Tyneside
Gordon Loader*	Crawley
Roger Mills	Bournemouth
Barry Nowell	Reading
Rob Pond	Crawley
Pete Powell	Reading
Brian Shorrocks	Crawley
Brian Smith*	Crawley
Bob Walker	Crawley
Bob Witherington	Crawley

*These members not present at the Convention were presented with their awards later.

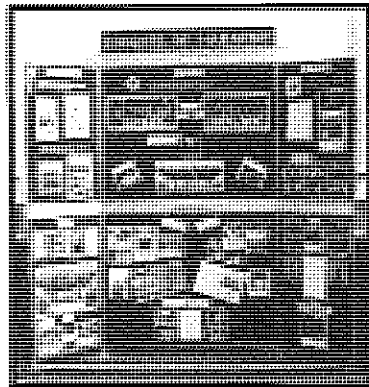
Club History Competition

To add to the celebrations of the Silver Jubilee Convention, BABS clubs had been invited, in December 1998, to produce display boards telling the history of their clubs. These were displayed as a Jubilee Exhibition in the Wintergardens Horseshoe Pavilion. Ed Waesche (SPEBSQSA President)



judged the displays.

The winners were Chess Valley, with East Midlands second and Sheffield third. The BABS display earned honourable mention. The other thirteen clubs, all of which were congratulated for their efforts by Ed Waesche, were Bristol, Bromley, Crawley, Harpenden, Kingsbridge, Leeds and Bradford, Lincoln, North East England, Potton, Preston, Reading, Stockport and Telford.



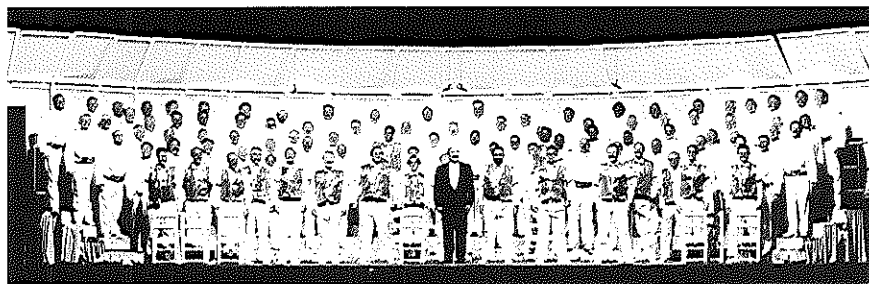
The Winning Entry

Convention Shows

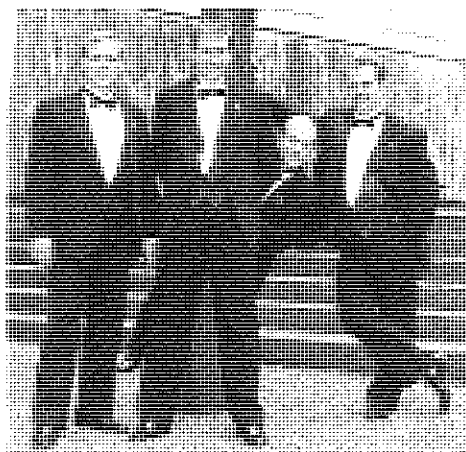
The four shows at the convention featured:

Chordial Exchange Quartet	Shannon Express Chorus
Shockwave Quartet	Cambridge Chord Company Chorus
Sounds Familiar Quartet	Capital Connection Chorus
Phoenix Chorus	North Wales Youth Harmony
Blue Gems Majorettes	

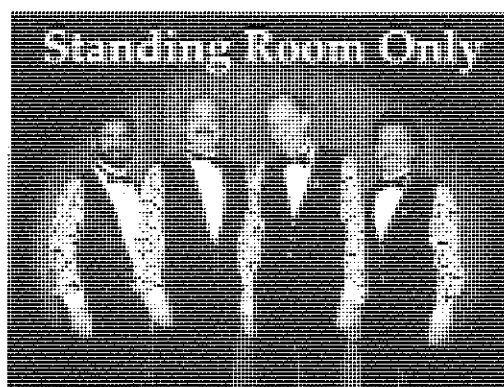
The following Society guests also performed:



The Phabulous Phoenicians
MD Russ Young

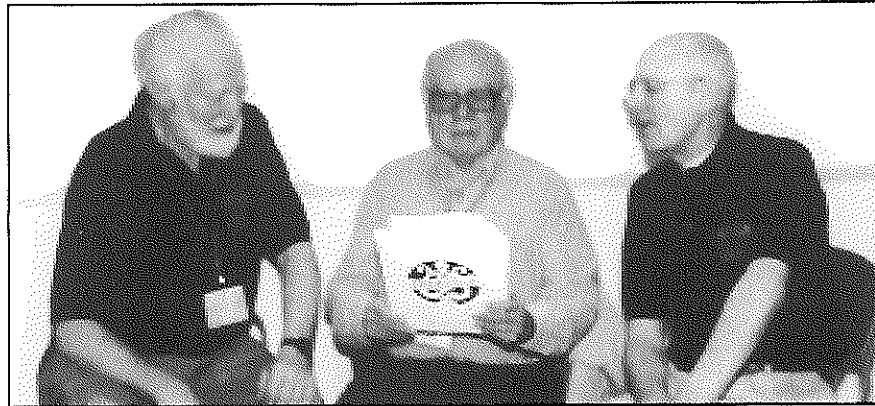


Joker's Wild



Convention Footnotes

*Left to right
Alan Johnson,
Dr Val Hicks
and Harry Wells*



Alan Johnson and Harry Wells who were beginning work on a twenty-five year history of the British Association were delighted to have the chance to spend a few hours with Val Hicks, the editor of *Heritage of Harmony*, the fifty-year history of SPEBSQSA and were able to benefit from his wisdom as an editor.

In his article in the July/August edition of the *Harmonizer*, Ed Waesche praised the attractiveness of the Blackpool Convention and credited this to the 'ambience, the fact that the Brits love to woodshed and gang-sing and that there was an infectious spirit of brotherhood and friendship'.

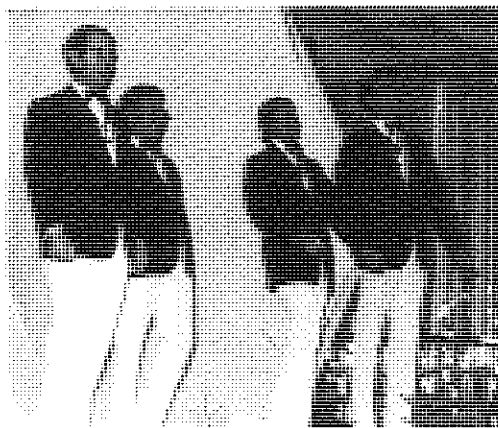
Closing Ceremony

The previously traditional Monday morning show was not held and Chairman of BABS, Chas Owen, performed the closing ceremony at the Jubilee Barbershop Bow Tie Ball in the Ballroom.

Barbershop Gallery

Champion Quartets

Personnel in all photographs are named from left to right with the following key:
L - Lead, T - Tenor, Ba - Baritone, B - Bass



1974 Ringleaders
Bill Little (B) Ron Avis (Ba)
Bob Walker (L) Paul Wren (T)



1975 Five Bridge Four
Ron Hope (T) Bill Gillis (L)
Keith Murray (B) Jack Dutton (Ba)



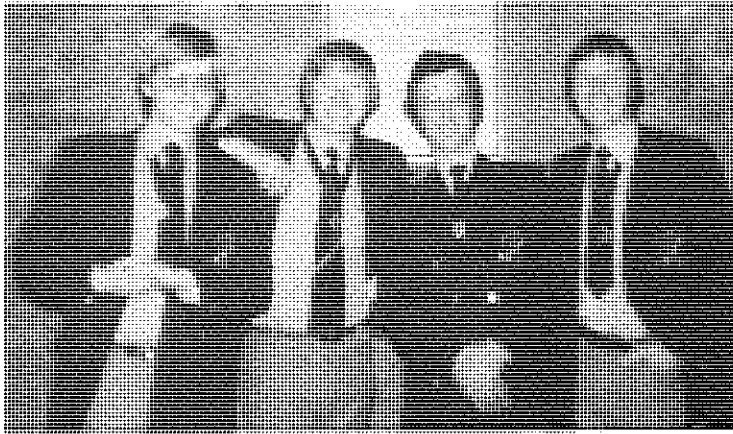
1976 Barrytones
Bob Watkin (B) Nick Carter (L)
Colin Carter (Ba) Barry Nowell (T)



1977 Fortunairs
Brian Shorrocks (T) Bob Walker (L)
George Parrish (B) Colin Barnaby (Ba)



1978 Newtown
Ringers
Bill Hilton (T)
Don Amos (L)
Bob Witherington (B)
Mike Watts (Ba)



1980 Par Four
 Steve Hall (Ba)
 Tom Percy (B)
 John Batty (L)
 Phil Bricknell (T)

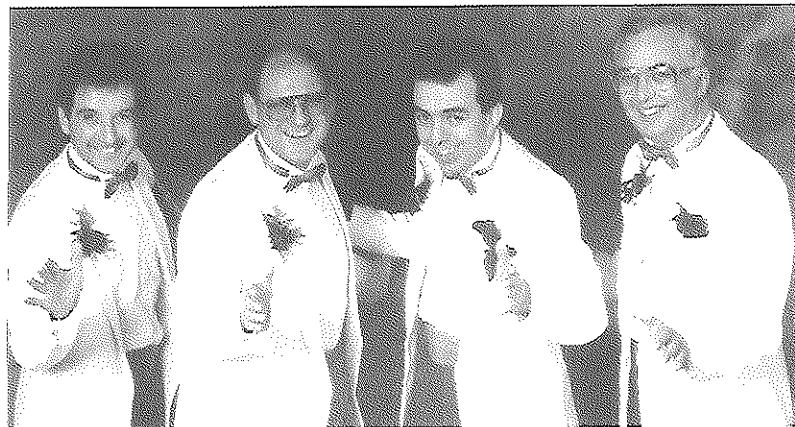


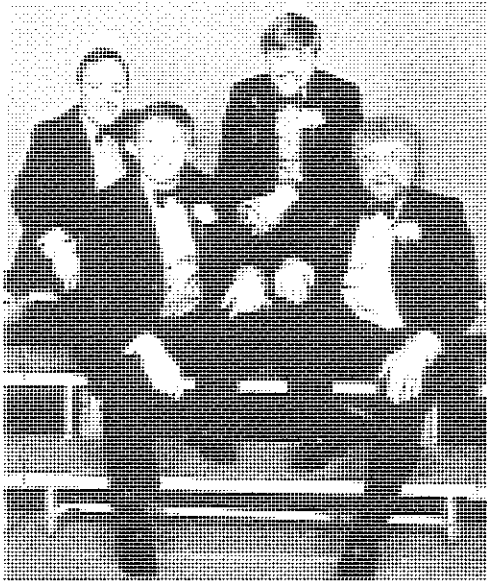
1981 Regency Pride
 Keith Pover (L) Graham Smith (B)
 Alan Henderson (T) Derek Barton (Ba)



1982 Limited Company
 Clive Landey (Ba) Howard Myers (L)
 Stu Wineberg (B) Steve Hall (T)

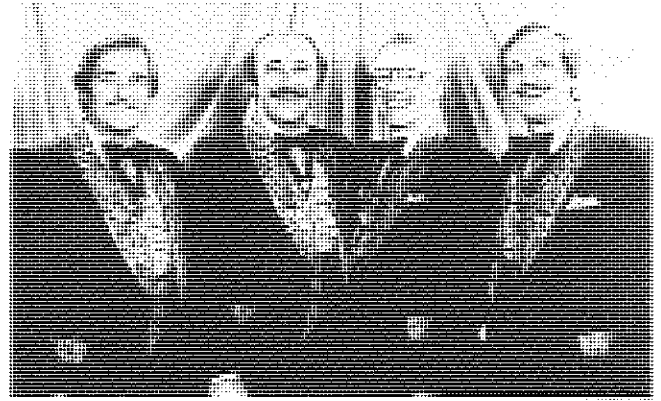
1983 Mancunian Way
 Gordon Frost (T)
 Robert Thompson (L)
 John Kelly (B)
 John Batty (Ba)





1984 On Spec

Richard Baker (Ba) Tom Percy (B)
Steve Hall (T) Keith Northrop (L)



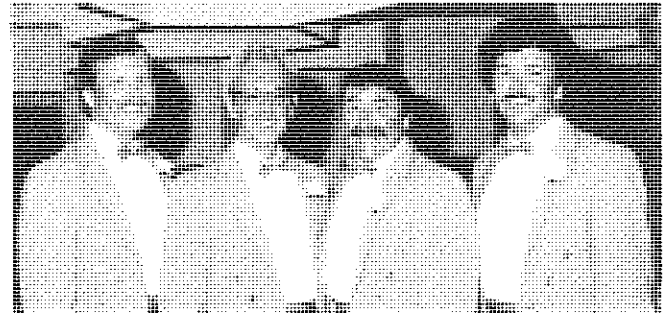
1985-Gilt Edge

Jack Bird (T) Graham Willcocks (L) Ian Wiseman (B)
Roger Williams (Ba)



1986 Junction 33

Colin Maskrey (Ba) Steve Holden (B)
Clive Hill (L) Phil Bricknell (T)



1987 Times Square

Richard Curtis (Ba) Geoff Packwood (B)
Tony Barnes (L) Vaughan Dooley (T)



1988 High Time

Laurie Whittle (Ba)
Roy Dawson (B)
Keith Northrop (L)
Steve Hall (T)



1989 Quartz Precision
 Derek Barton (T) Brian Schofield (L)
 Graham Smith (B) Andrew Clarke (Ba)

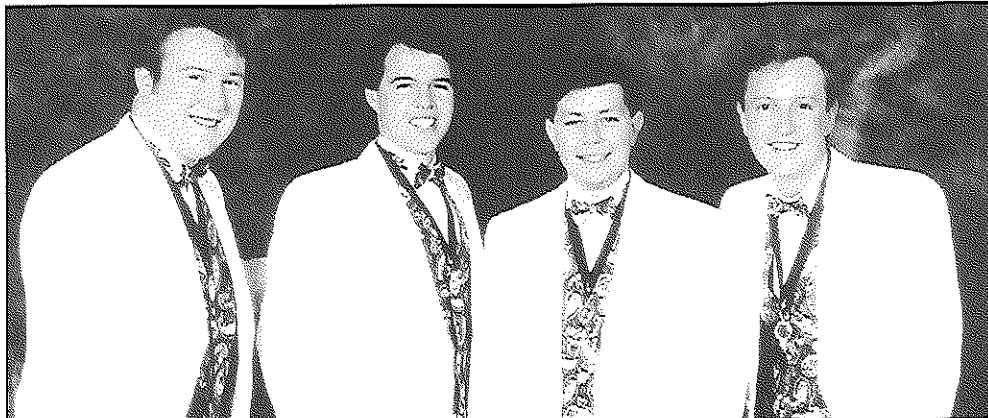


1990 Curtain Call
 Rod Butcher (T) Bernie Cureton (L)
 John Riseborough (B) Dale Kynaston (Ba)



1991 Talk of the Town
 John Ward (Ba)
 Roy Dawson (B)
 Keith Northrop (L)
 David Tamar (T)

1992 Quattro
 Dave Arran (T)
 David Brown (L)
 Martin Ford (B)
 Tim Braham (Ba)





1993 Island Engagement
Jon Conway (Ba) Alan Sloper (L)
Stuart Sides (B) Alan Hartley (T)



1994 Sound Assembly
Rod Butcher (T) Bernie Cureton (L)
Martin Ford (B) Martin Florey (Ba)

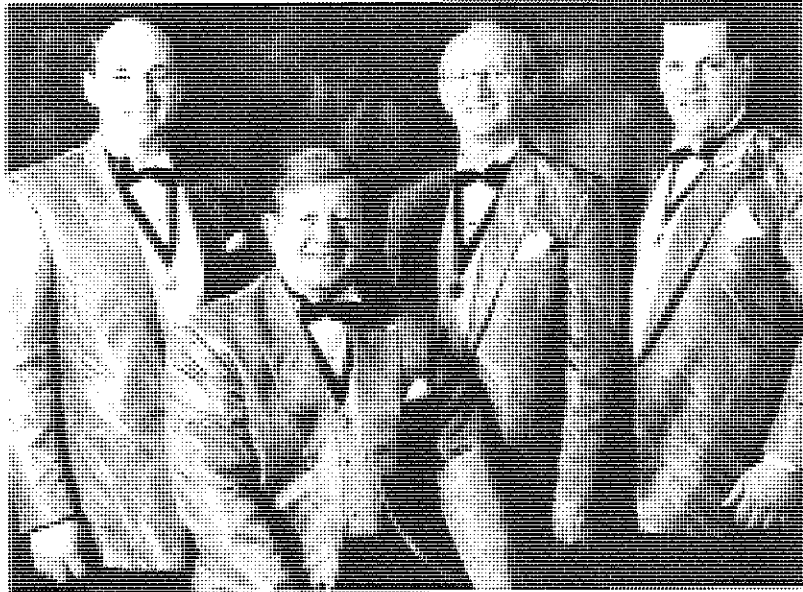


1995 Smilin' Thru
Paul Grier (Ba)
Steve Holden (B)
David Brown (L)
Russ Beeden (T)

1996 Hooked On Harmony
Derek Barton (T) Brian Schofield (L)
Gerry Burgum (B) Andy Curd (Ba)



1997 Cambridge Blues
Ian James (T) Bob Croft (L)
David Farmer (B)
John Palmer (Ba)



1998 Chordial Exchange
Chris Barnes (T) Tom Riley (Ba)
Dave Roberts (L) Tom Percy (B)

1999 Shockwave
Graham Davies (B) Tony Bylett (T)
Paul Grier (Ba) David Brown (L)



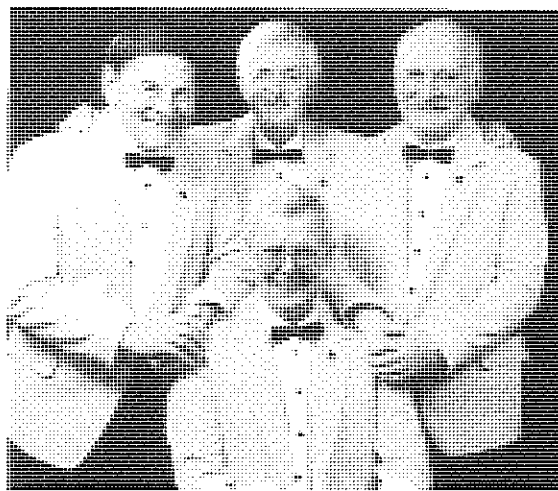
Barbershop Gallery

Champion Seniors Quartets



1992 Newtown Ringers
Bill Hilton (T) Don Amos (L)
Bob Witherington (B) Ron Wilkinson (Ba)

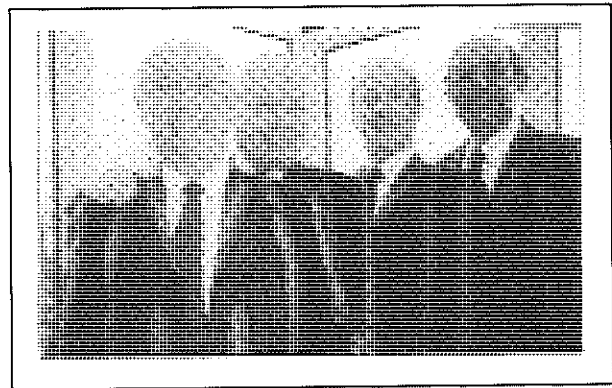
1993 Vocal Gentry
Roger Mitchell (T) Peter Higgins (L)
Maurice Magsor (B) Harry Ambler (Ba)



1994 Banks of the Tyne
Carr Pritchard (Ba) Charlie Gutteridge (L)
Fred Carney (B) Ted Glass (T)



1995 Fortunairs
Bob Walker (L) Colin Barnaby (Ba)
Maurice Lewis (B) Brian Shorrocks (T)



1996 Southern Tradition
Gerry Holland (Ba) John Harvey (T)
Mike McKeown (B) Alan Hill (L)
Poor quality photograph-only one available



1997 Bifocal Minority
Alan Johnson (Ba)
Chris Bennett (B)
Alan Baker (L)
Alan Wetheral (T)



1998 Silver Sound
Mick Barnacle (T) Mike McWhinney (L)
John Perry (B) Frank Dilkes (Ba)

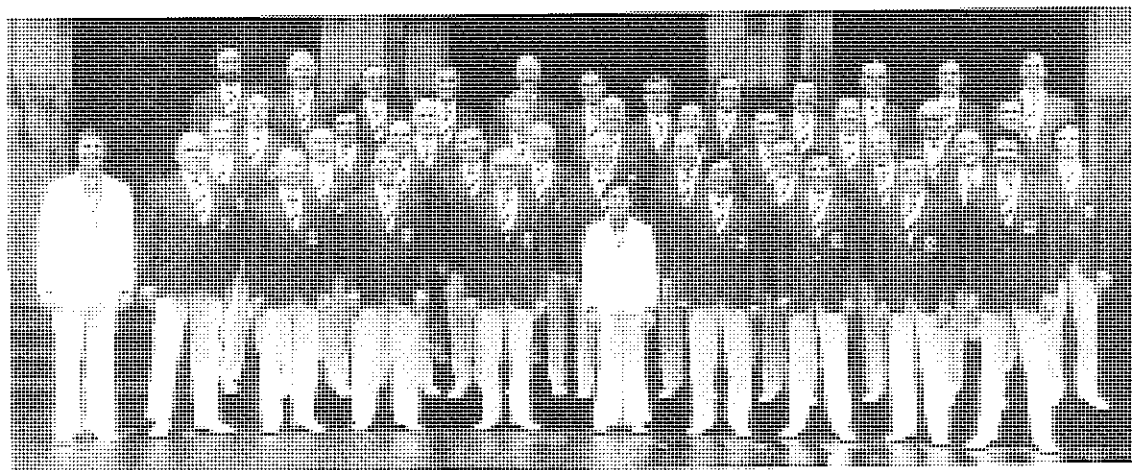


1999 Take Note
Pete Soole (T) Larry Friend (L)
Brian Cook (Ba) John Pinton (B)

Barbershop Gallery
Champion Choruses



1975 Crawley Chordsmen
Crawley
Directed by Bob Walker



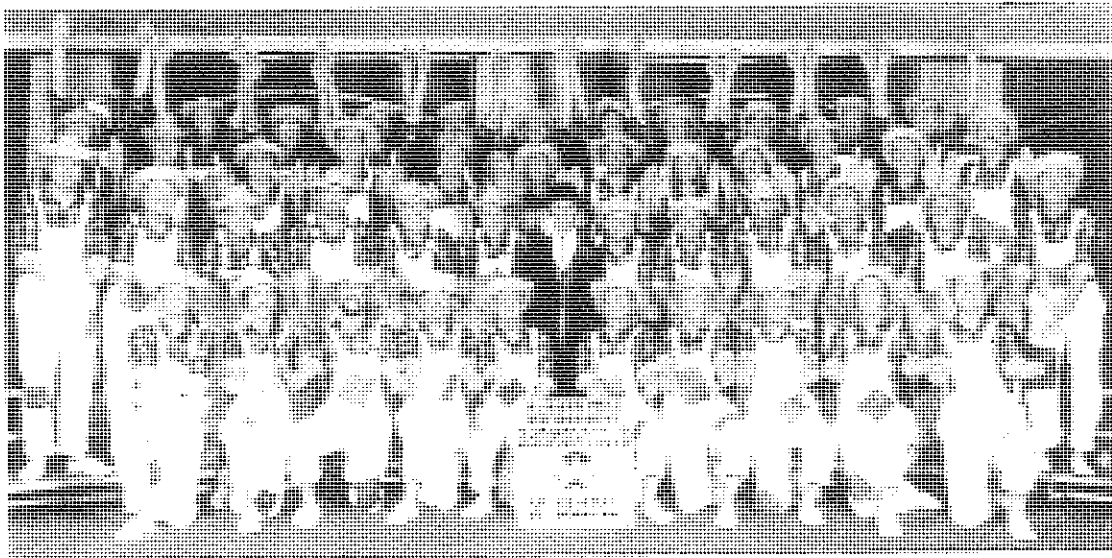
1976 Crawley Chordsmen
Crawley
Directed by Bob Walker



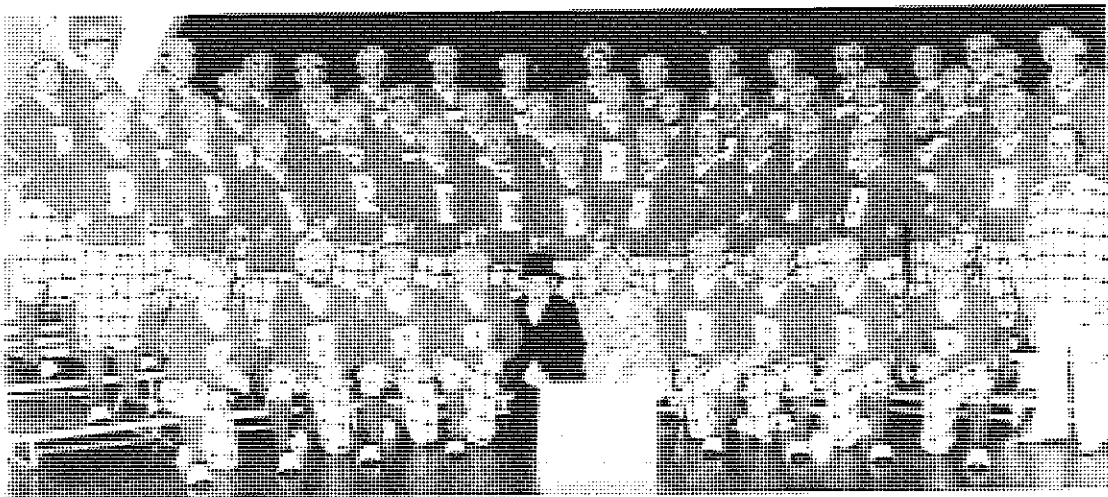
1977 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Mike Charles



1978 Crawley Chordsmen
Crawley
Directed by Bob Walker



1980 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Mike Charles



1981 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Mike Charles



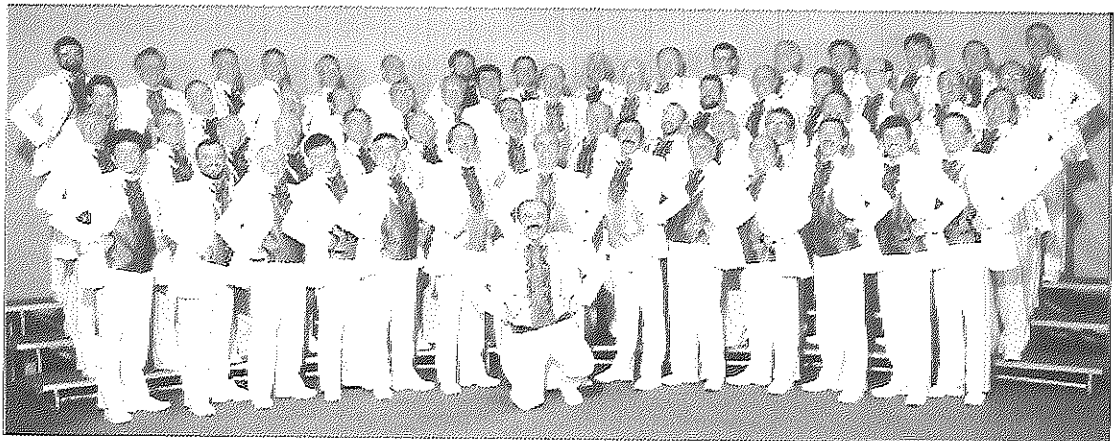
1982 Roker Peers of Harmony
Wearside
Directed by Keith Murray



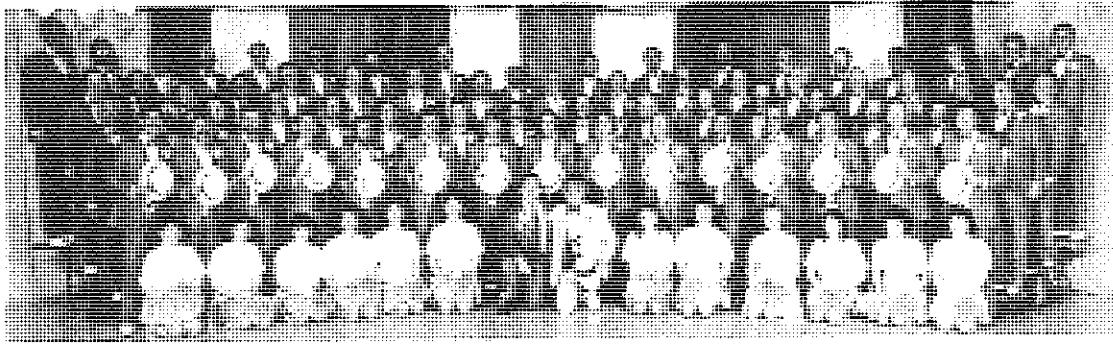
1983 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Mike Charles



1984 Crawley Chordsmen
Crawley
Directed by Bob Walker



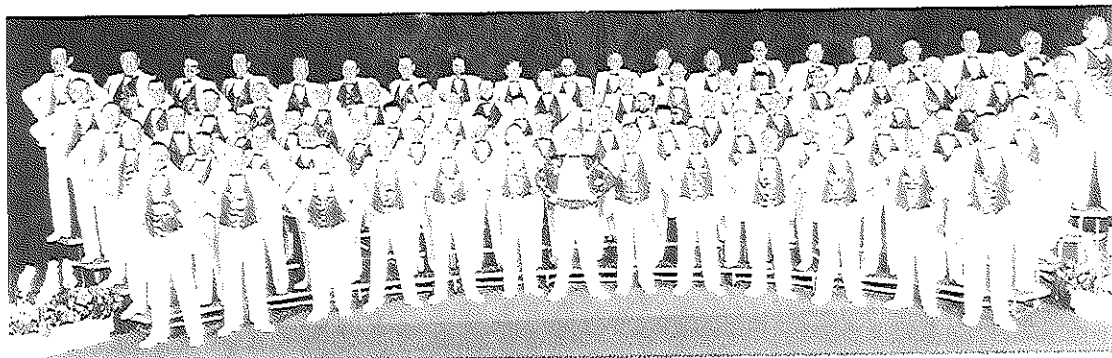
1985 Pilgrimages
Plymouth
Directed by Graham Willcocks



1986 Hallmark of Harmony
Sheffield
Directed by John Grant



1987 Pilgimaires
Plymouth
Graham Willcocks



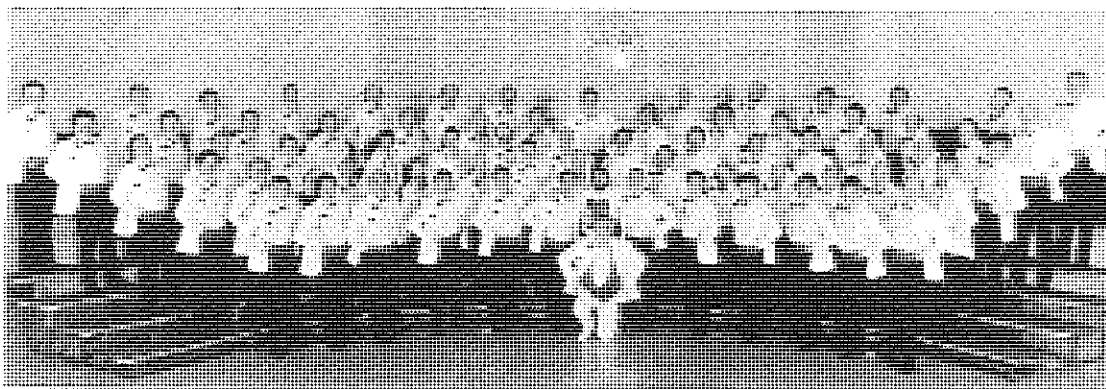
1988 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Ken Taylor



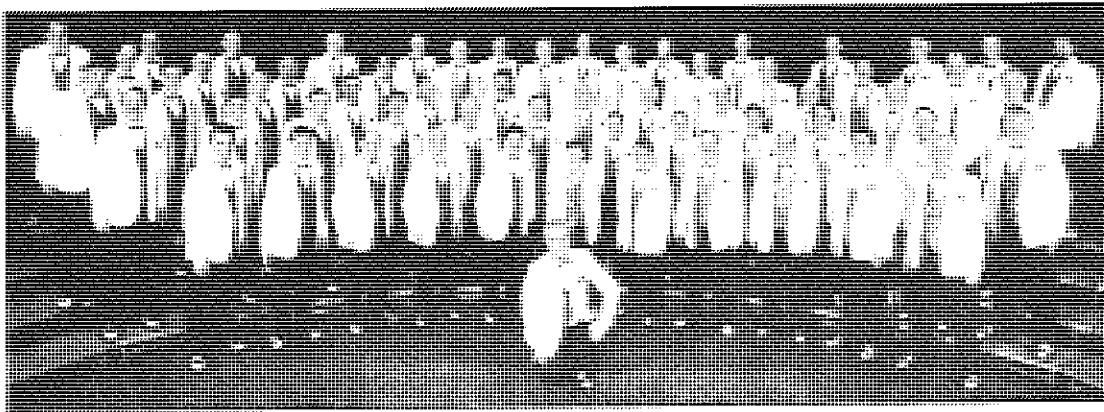
1989 Hallmark of Harmony
Sheffield
Directed by John Grant



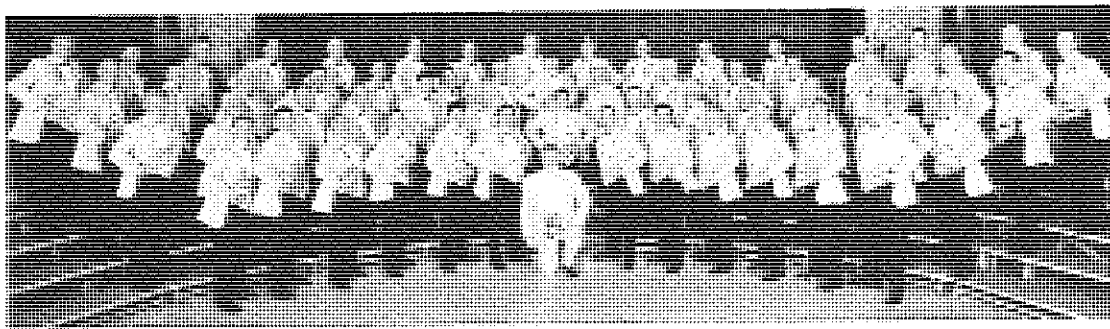
1990 Great Western Chorus
Bristol
Directed by Ken Taylor



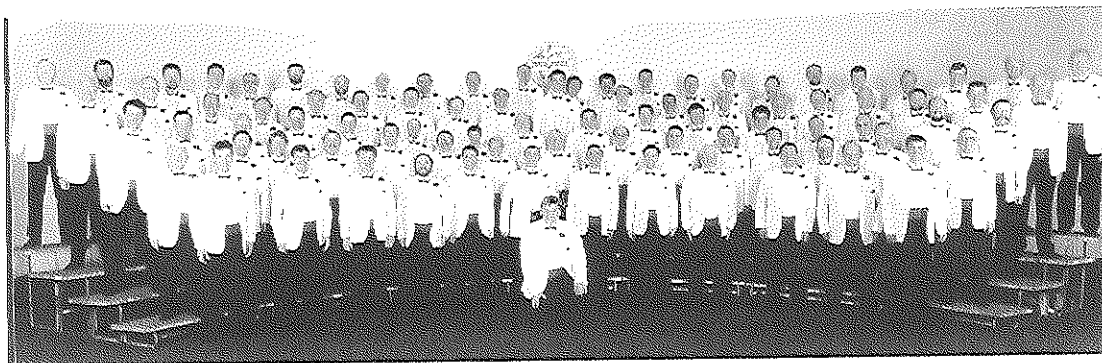
1991 Hallmark of Harmony
Sheffield
Directed by John Grant



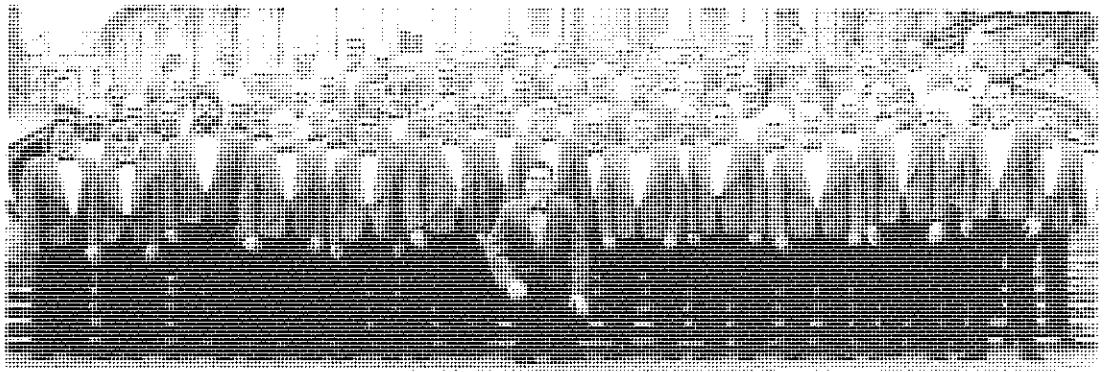
1992 Rainy City Chorus
Greater Manchester
Directed by John Batty



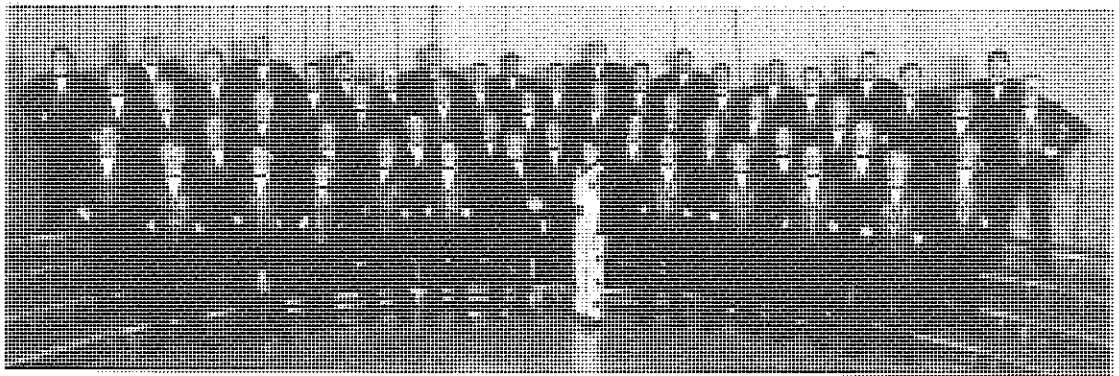
1993 Grand Central Chorus
East Midlands
Directed by John Grant



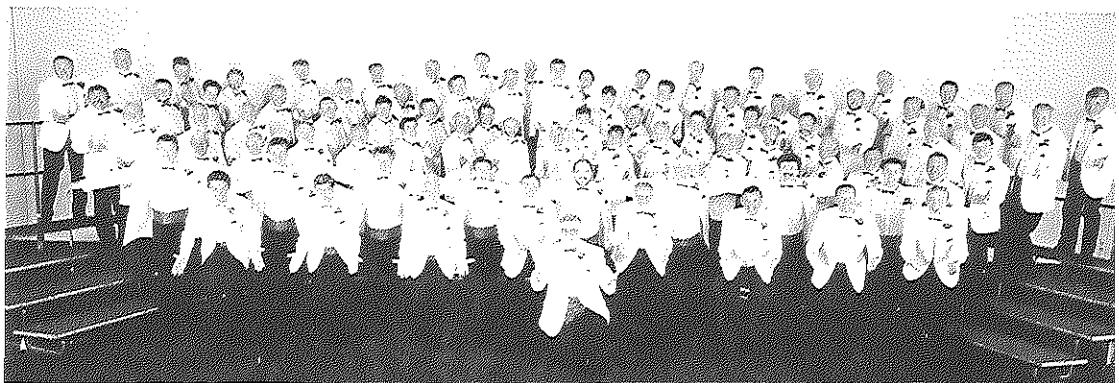
1994 Hallmark of Harmony
Sheffield
Directed by Steve Hall



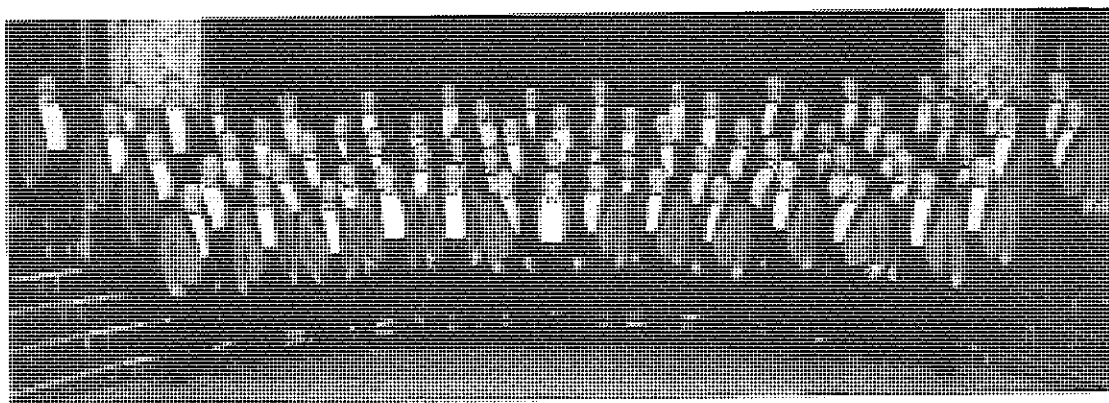
1995 Shannon Express
Potton
Directed by Jim Catt



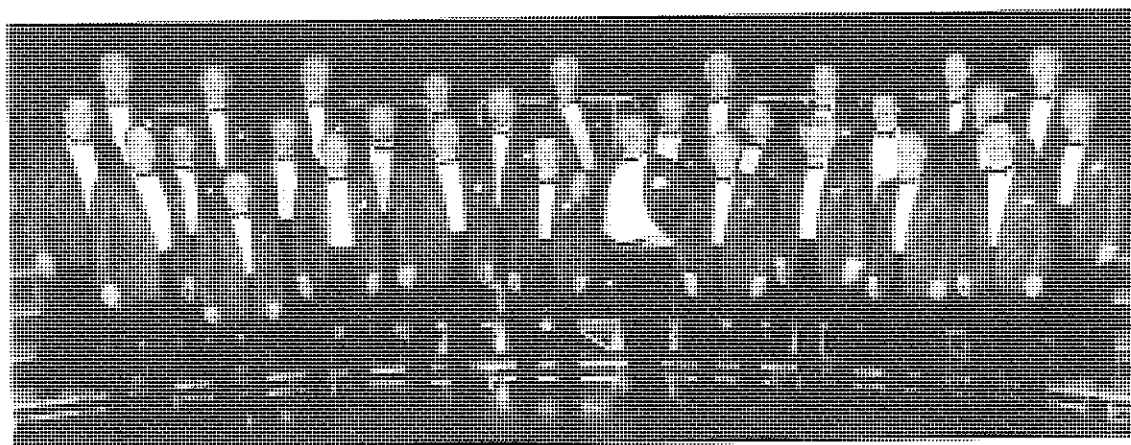
1996 Grand Central Chorus
East Midlands
Directed by John Grant



1997 Hallmark of Harmony
Sheffield
Directed by John Grant



1998 Shannon Express
Potton
Directed by Graham Davies



1999 Cambridge Chord Company
Cambridge
Directed by Paul Davies

Archives
Statistics
Reference Material

BRITISH BARBERSHOP CLUBS - DATES OF REGISTRATION WITH BABS
and DATES OF FORMATION OF FOUNDING CLUBS

Key:

* These clubs since de-registered with BABS

(a) These clubs amalgamated under the name Bournemouth & East Dorset in October 1982

(b) This club re-named North East of England in 1993

(c) These clubs amalgamated under the name Leeds & Bradford in 1995

(d) This club re-named Hemel Hempstead in 1989, then Chess Valley in 1999

(e) These clubs combined and re-named Portsmouth & District in 1986

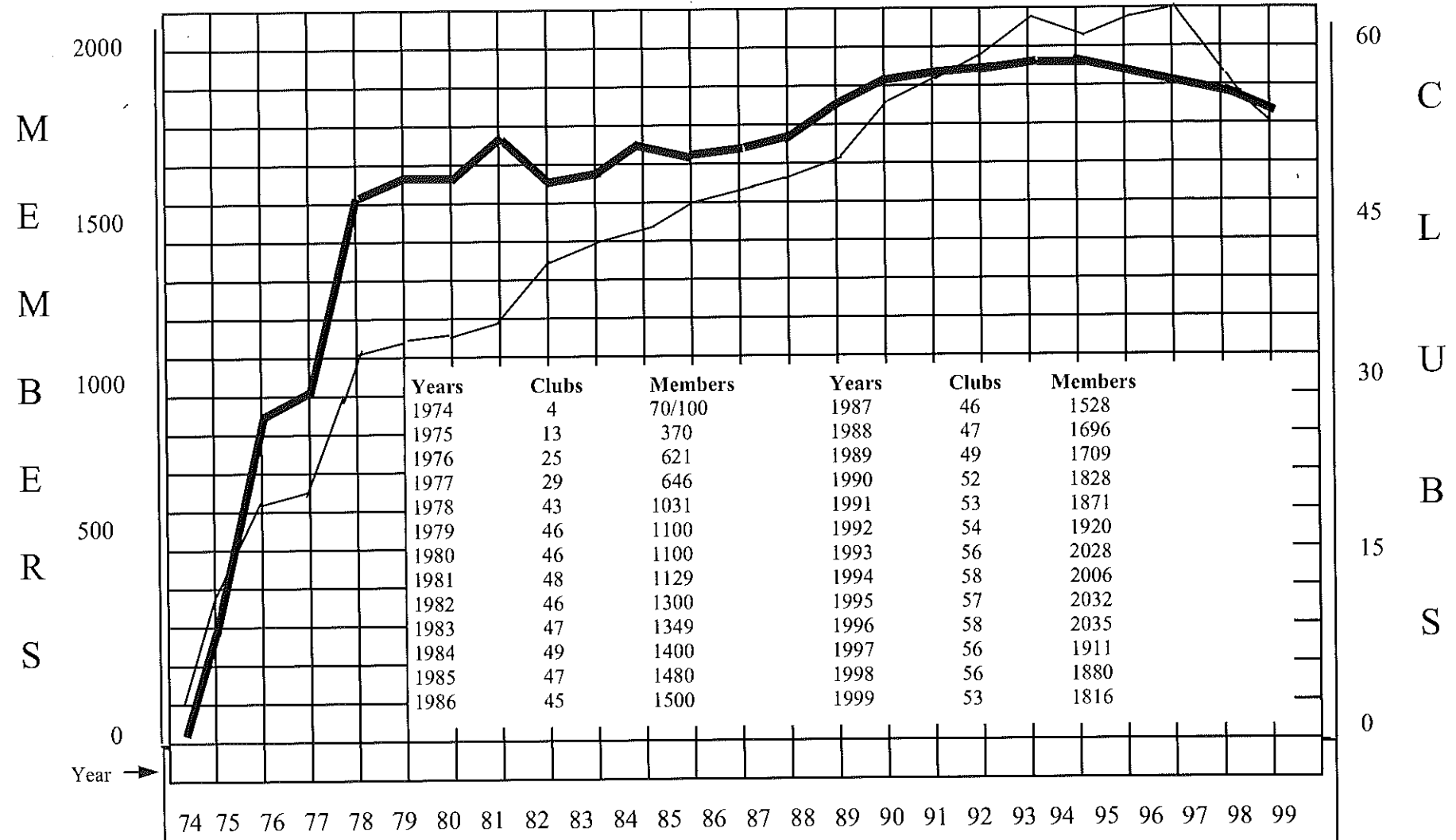
Crawley -4 November 1964	West Midlands -February 1978
Tyneside -1 October 1971*	Wombwell -February 1978*
Brighton & Hove -29 November 1971	Garden Isle -February 1978
Bournemouth -February 1972 (a)	Blackpool & Fylde -February 1978
Reading -September 1974	Guildford -May 1978
East Anglia -October 1974*	Sheffield -August 1978
Colchester -October 1974*	Potton -August 1978
Leicester -October 1974	Pershore -August 1978
Liverpool -October 1974	London -December 1978*
Nottingham- October 1974*	Plymouth -December 1978
Stockport -October 1974	Bolton -March 1979
Bristol -January 1975	Cheltenham -March 1979*
Preston -January 1975	Greater Manchester -March 1979
Wearside -April 1975 (b)	Trent Valley -February 1980*
Leeds -April 1975 (c)	Gwent -February 1980*
Cwmbran -April 1975*	Portsmouth & Fareham -March 1980 (e)
East Dorset -April 1975 (a)	Bradford -September 1981 (c)
Stevenage -April 1975*	Llandudno -September 1981*
Worthing -April 1975	Norwich -September 1982
Chesham -September 1975(d)	Harlow -September 1982*
Cemaes Bay -September 1975*	Leatherhead -September 1982*
Bridgewater -January 1976*	Torbay -September 1983*
Bromley -January 1976	Wantage -September 1983
Saffron Walden -January 1976	Kegworth -September 1983
Hartlepool -March 1976	Benllech -March 1984*
Carshalton -March 1976*	Taunton -March 1984
Anglesey -April 1976	Exeter -March 1984*
Solent City - November 1976 (e)	Barnsley -April 1984*
Weston-super-Mare -November 1976*	Middlesborough -September 1984
Merseyside -July 1977*	West London -September 1984
Cardiff -July 1977*	Selby -September 1986
Teignmouth -July 1977*	Milton Keynes -March 1987
Southampton -July 1977*	Chelmsford -September 1987
Telford -July 1977	Cornwall -September 1987*
Derby -December 1977*	Harpenden -September 1987

Newbury -March 1988*
Mold -March 1988
Southport -September 1989
Staines -March 1990
Cambridge -March 1990
Humberside -March 1991
East Midlands -March 1992
Aberdeen -September 1992
Kingsbridge -March 1993

Calder Valley -September 1993
Wigan -September 1993
Wisbech -September 1993
Coventry -September 1994
Lincoln -September 1994
Sale -March 1995
Leeds/Bradford -September 1995 (c)

Registered Clubs and Membership Growth
(Excluding Club at Large)

— Clubs — Members



25 YEARS OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF BARBERSHOP SINGERS

List of Conventions and Results

Event	Organiser or Manager	Quartet Medallists	1st, 2nd and 3rd Choruses and Chorus Directors	Total Entrants
26 May 1973 First Gathering of British Barbershop Clubs, Hazlewick School, Crawley	Robin Pond	No contests held	No contests held	11 Quartets 6 choruses
27-28 July 1974 First Association Convention Newcastle-upon-Tyne University	Fred Williams	Ringleaders -Crawley/ Brighton Beckford Brothers -Crawley Five Bridge Four -Tyneside	No Chorus contest held	14 Quartets
5-7 December 1975 Brighton Butlins Hotel	Len Ward	Five Bridge Four-Wearside Fortunairs-Crawley Barrytones-Reading	Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Tyneside Chorus -Bert Grimshaw Reading Chorus- Pete Powell	22 Quartets 15 Choruses
23-25 September 1976 Birmingham University and Town Hall	John Booth	Barrytones-Reading Fortunairs-Crawley Newtown Ringers-Crawley	Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray	30 Quartets 14 Choruses
23-25 September 1977 University and De Montfort Hall, Leicester	Roy Phillips	Fortunairs-Crawley Newtown Ringers-Crawley Harmony Raisers-Bristol	Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles Berkshire Barbershoppers Chorus- Barry Nowell Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray	28 Quartets 19 Choruses
10-12 November 1978 Caister Holiday Centre	Trevor James	Newtown Ringers-Crawley Class Distinction-Crawley Harmony Raisers-Bristol	Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles	16 Quartets 17 Choruses
6-7 October 1979 Derbyshire Miners' Holiday Centre, Skegness	Brian Lockley	Official quartet and chorus contests not held. Unofficial contests for novice quartets, octets and new choruses were staged for 19 quartets and 7 choruses. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Quartet Placings</p> <p>Partners in Time-Reading</p> <p>Chime Gentlemen-West Midlands</p> <p>Four Leaf Clover-Greater Manchester</p> <p>Octet Placings</p> <p>Bristol Cream-Bristol</p> <p>Spectrum-Greater Manchester</p> <p>The Winners-Wearside</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Chorus Placings</p> <p>Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant</p> <p>Rainy City Chorus-John Batty</p> <p>Anvil Chorus-Mike Sides</p> </div> </div>		
3-5 May 1980 Birmingham Metropole Hotel and NEC	Brian Lockley	Par Four-Manchester Harmony Raisers-Bristol Partners in Time-Reading	Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant	24 Quartets 14 Choruses

10-12 April 1981 Derbyshire Miners' Holiday Centre, Skegness	Brian Lockley	Regency Pride- Brighton& Hove/ Crawley Chime Gentlemen-West Midlands Savoire Faire-Liverpool	Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray	31 Quartets 30 Choruses
16-18 April 1982 Warwick University	Brian Lockley	Limited Company-Leeds/ Greater Manchester Partners in Time-Reading Savoire Faire-Liverpool	Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Pilgrimages-Gordon Willcocks	23 Quartets 31 Choruses
8-10 April 1983 Warwick University	Brian Lockley	Mancunian Way-Manchester On Spec-Preston/ Greater Manchester Savoire Faire-Liverpool	Great Western Chorus-Mike Charles Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker	25 Quartets 31 Choruses
13-15 April 1984 Warwick University	Trevor James	On Spec-Preston /Greater Manchester Rogues Gallery-Reading Gilt Edge-Plymouth	Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Roker Peers of Harmony-Keith Murray	26 Quartets 32 Choruses
12-14 April 1985 Warwick University	Gerry Holland	Gilt Edge-Plymouth Channel Four-Greater Manchester Junction 33- Sheffield	Pilgrimages-Gordon Willcocks Great Western Chorus-Ken Taylor Hallmark of Harmony- John Grant	34 Quartets 30 Choruses
2-5 May 1986 Harrogate International Centre	Trevor James	Junction 33-Sheffield Delta Kings-Potton/Wantage/Saffron Walden Times Square-Sheffield	Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Great Western Chorus-Ken Taylor Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker	34 Quartets 35 Choruses
1-4 May 1987 Bournemouth International Centre	Gerry Holland	Times Square-Sheffield Second Nature-Gwent By Appointment-Bournemouth / East Dorset	Pilgrimages-Graham Willcocks Great Western Chorus-Ken Taylor Crawley Chordsmen-Bob Walker	33 Quartets 32 Choruses
27-30 May 1988 Harrogate International Centre	Trevor James	High Time-Bradford /Mold Quartz Precision-Bromley/ Crawley Delta Kings- Potton/Wantage/ Saffron Walden	Great Western Chorus-Ken Taylor Hallmark of Harmony- John Grant Anvil Chorus-Rod Butcher	36 Quartets 34 Choruses
28 April-1 May 1989 Bournemouth International Centre	Gerry Holland	Quartz Precision-Bromley/Crawley Team Spirit-Worthing First Impression-Liverpool /Gwent	Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Pilgrimages- Graham Willcocks Rainy City Chorus-John Batty	33 Quartets 32 Choruses
25-28 May 1990 Harrogate International Centre	Trevor James	Curtain Call-West Midlands Talk of the Town-Bradford/Bolton/West London By Appointment-Bournemouth/ East Dorset	Great Western Chorus-Ken Taylor Pilgrimages-Graham Willcocks Rainy City Chorus-John Batty	39 Quartets 29 Choruses
3-6 May 1991 Bournemouth International Centre	Laurie Peters	Talk of The Town- Bradford/ Bolton/ WestLondon By Appointment-Bournemouth &East Dorset Quattro-Leeds	Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Pilgrimages-Graham Willcocks Shannon Express- Jim Catt	28 Quartets 29 Choruses

1-4 May 1992 Birmingham International Centre	Ray Bylett	Quattro-Bradford/Leeds By Appointment-Bournemouth & East Dorset Island Engagement-Portsmouth & District Seniors Champions-Newtown Ringers-Crawley	Rainy City Chorus- John Batty Shannon Express-Jim Catt Pilgrimages-Graham Willcocks	33 Quartets 33 Choruses
28-31 May 1993 Harrogate International Centre	Frank Withey	Island Engagement-Portsmouth & District Harmonix-Potton By Appointment-Bournemouth & East Dorset Seniors Champions-Vocal Gentry- Bradford	Grand Central Chorus-John Grant Hallmark of Harmony- Steve Hall Great Western Chorus- Ken Taylor	27 Quartets 31 Choruses
29 April-2 May 1994 Brighton Centre	Laurie Peters	Sound Assembly W. Midlands/Monmouth/Bradford Harmonix-Potton Chordial Exchange-Bolton/Greater Manchester Seniors Champions- Banks of the Tyne -N/ E of England	Hallmark of Harmony-Steve Hall Cambridge Chord Company-Paul Davies Thames Valley Chorus-Tony Searle	37 Quartets 35 Choruses
26-29 May 1995 Harrogate International Centre	Ray Bylett	Smilin' Thru-Sheffield Harmonix-Potton By Appointment-Bournemouth & East Dorset Seniors Quartet Champions- Fortunairs-Crawley	Shannon Express- Jim Catt Thames Valley Chorus- Tony Searle Grand Central Chorus-John Grant	35 Quartets 35 Choruses
3-6 May 1996 Bournemouth International Centre	Laurie Peters	Hooked on Harmony-Worthing /Crawley Chordial Exchange-Bolton /Greater Manchester Harmonix-Potton Seniors Champions- Southern Tradition-Reading /Wantage	Grand Central Chorus-John Grant Hallmark of Harmony- Steve Hall Great Western Chorus- Bernie Cureton	41 Quartets 39 Choruses
2-5 May 1997 Brighton Centre	Frank Withey	Cambridge Blues-Cambridge High Fidelity-Portsmouth & District TVQ-Portsmouth & District Seniors Champions- Bifocal Minority-N/ E of England	Hallmark of Harmony-John Grant Cambridge Chord Company-Paul Davies Thames Valley Chorus-Tony Searle	31 Quartets 31 Choruses
22-25 May 1998 Harrogate International Centre	Ray Bylett	Chordial Exchange-Bolton /Greater Manchester High Fidelity- Portsmouth & District Nickleodeon-Chelmsford /Saffron Walden Seniors Champions-Silver Sound-East Midlands	Shannon Express-Graham Davies Cambridge Chord Company-Paul Davies Thames Valley Chorus-Tony Searle	16 Quartets 20 Choruses
30 April-3 May 1999 Blackpool Wintergardens	Gerry Holland	Shockwave-Potton/Selby By Appointment-Bournemouth & East Dorset High Fidelity- Portsmouth & District Seniors Quartet Champions-Take Note-Kingsbridge	Cambridge Chord Company-Paul Davies Hallmark of Harmony- Steve Holden Grand Central Chorus-Mark Burnip	20 Quartets 39 Choruses

Some Significant Events in British Barbershop History

- 1958 Harry Danser visited USA; saw the show *Music Man* on Broadway featuring the *Buffalo Bills* quartet. Later bought some barbershop records.
- Jan 1960 Harry contacted SPEBSQSA and asked to be put on mailing list for *The Harmonizer*. First contact made with the Society by anyone in the UK.
- Nov 1960 First UK barbershop quartet, *The Barbershop Four*, was formed with David Steele (lead), Bob Witherington (bass), Harry Danser's sons John and Tony (tenor and baritone).
- June 1964 Harry Danser, on a visit to the USA met Canadian George Shields, M.D. of East York Chapter Chorus.
- Sept 1964 George Shields visited the Dansers in Crawley and urged Harry to start a chorus.
- Nov 1964 Three men met in Danser's home. Britain's first barbershop club Crawley formed.
- Feb 1965 *Crawley Chordsmen* gave first performance at St Francis Mental Hospital, Haywards Heath.
- May 1965 At Crawley Club's first AGM, George Howe was elected Chairman, Harry Danser Secretary, Tony Danser Treasurer and M.D. Harry was recognised as the club's Founder and George Shields was made an honorary member of the club.
- Sept/Oct 1971 Barrie Best's one man tour of the UK in ten towns and cities publicised barbershop singing on local and national radio, TV and public meetings.
- Oct/Nov 1971 Barbershop clubs were formed in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Brighton and Hove.
- 1972 A Barbershop Club was formed in Bournemouth.
- 1973 First Gathering of British Barbershop Clubs in Crawley.
- Feb 1974 Association of British Barbershop Clubs founded.
- Oct 1974 Association name changed to British Association of Barbershoppers.
- July 1974 First Annual Championship Quartet contest staged at first Association convention held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- 1974 Competition held to design Association logo and badge.
- Aug 1974 Humphrey Lyttelton presented a sixty-minute BBC television programme, *Most Happy Fellows*, based on the Portland International Convention when the *Pacificaires* quartet took the silver medal for second time.
- 1975 Music Committee set up under Co-ordinator Bob Walker to cover all musical matters including contests, rules, judging programmes and judge recruitment.
- 1975 Use of cameras and tape recorders banned during contests.
- 1975 Gold medal quartets barred from competing again in BABS quartet championships - 'Once a champion always a champion'.
- 1975 Judging Programme set up by *Ringleaders* –1974 BABS Champion quartet.
- Dec 1975 First of two editions of *News Sheet*, edited and produced by Fred Williams (Tyneside) issued to Association members; third edition edited and produced by Vic Nield (Stockport).
- Aug 1976 Martin Anderson took over as Editor of the *News Sheet* for the next forty monthly editions.
- 1976 First Association Directory produced by Don Amos.
- 1977 First Association Quartet Coaching Workshop held in Nottingham.

- 1977 Designer of Association badge assigned copyright of badge logo to Association.
- 1977 Club -at- Large set up.
- May 1977 First Quartet Preliminary contests held in Bournemouth and Nottingham.
- 1978 Membership total reaches one thousand.
- 1978 Award of free scholarships to SPEBSQSA Harmony College in St Joseph Missouri.
- 1978 First Chorus Preliminary Contests held. Eight choruses given byes to Convention Finals.
- 1979 First Barbershop College (four days) held at Owens Park, Manchester University, one hundred and ten members attending. Faculty members include Val Hicks and Lyle Pettigrew.
- Jan. 1980 BABS *News Sheet* changed name to *Harmony Express* –chosen from a member's suggestion. Martin Anderson continued as editor until Colin Graham took over as editor for seven editions in August 1990.
- 1980 Harmony College held at Liverpool University. First *Thursdayaires Chorus* restricted to members who arrived on the eve of the College began annual tradition lasting twelve years.
- March 1981 Barry Nowell took over as Editor of *Harmony Express*
- 1981 Association name changed to British Association of Barbershop Singers.
- 1981 Around one hundred and fifty members of *Northernaires*, formed from a number of clubs, travelled to Toronto. Invited to sing at the SPEBSQSA Ontario District Convention.
- 1982 Harmony College re-located to West Midlands College of Higher Education, Walsall. Dr. Bob Johnson, of the Society becomes a member of faculty.
- 1982 First of four consecutive Annual Conventions held at Warwick University.
- 1982 At AGM Dr. Bob Johnson accepted honorary membership of BABS.
- 1983 Musical Directors' Seminar led by Dr. Greg Lyne. Invitations limited to MDs of all BABS Choruses plus one Assistant M.D per club organised and run by the Saffron Walden Club. Participants hosted by the Saffron Walden Club members.
- 1983 Society Educator Dave Stevens at BABS Harmony College delivers presentation *What We Are Trying to Preserve?*
- 1984 Code of Ethics for BABS adopted to improve the image of barbershop to the general public.
- 1984 George Shields accepted honorary membership of BABS.
- 1985 SPEBSQSA agreed that BABS quartet champions would be entitled to compete in the Society International Quartet championships.
- 1985 *How To Start a Barbershop Club from A to Z* manual produced.
- 1986 Gilt Edge, BABS 1985 Champion Quartet first Association quartet to compete in the Society International quartet contest at the Salt Lake City Convention.
- 1986 A copy of *Introducing BABS* (little red booklet) issued to every member.
- 1987 First of three BABS COTS weekend courses was set up at Warwick University with sixty-one members participating.
- 1987 Long Term Working Party set up, comprising Peter May, Gerry Holland, Tony Searle and Martin Hill with a brief to produce a plan for the future of the Association.
- 1987 World record largest Barbershop Chorus (over one thousand voices) directed by Dr. Bob Johnson performs at the Bournemouth Convention. Special audiocassette produced of the rehearsal under the title *I Was There!*

- 1987 Hon Life President of BABS, Don Amos involved in plans for the World Harmony Council.
- 1987 Production of Bill Myers Vowel Shape/Sounds package complete with chart and mirror.
- 1988 *Northernaires* first BABS chorus to appear on the inaugural World Jamboree Concert (profits going to World Harmony Council funds) and invited to be part of a five hundred-man chorus directed by Dr. Bob Johnson.
- 1989 Second quartet invited to represent BABS at Society International Contests.
- 1989 Administration of the Association re-organised and Directorships were established on the Executive Committee.
- 1989 Joe Liles made an Honorary Member of BABS.
- 1990 BABS Champion Chorus invited to compete at International Contests.
- 1990 Number of BABS Clubs reaches fifty.
- 1990 *Hallmark of Harmony* first BABS Champion Chorus to compete at International Convention in San Francisco.
- 1991 Steve Hall appointed as Field Services Officer (Music).
- 1991 Seniors Quartet Championship Contest inaugurated. First Champions *Newtown Ringers*.
- 1992 BABS represented by two quartets, *Quartz Precision* and *By Appointment*, for the first time in International Contest at New Orleans Convention.
- 1992 Aberdeen the first Scottish club to register with BABS.
- 1993 Membership total reaches 2,000.
- 1993 Mel Knight made an honorary member of BABS.
- 1993 Excellence in PR awards presented to seventeen club PROs by Geoff Howe, Association PRO.
- 1994 Number of BABS Clubs reaches fifty-eight.
- Oct 1994 Harmony College relocated to Telford.
- 1994 BABS MBNA Affinity Credit Card adopted.
- 1994 Membership Survey undertaken.
- 1996 Mel Knight Roadshow lasted twenty days, including five shows around England Scotland and Wales. Nine quartets and seven choruses took part. Mel Knight coached twenty-one choruses and small groups and two quartets.
- 1996 Membership total reaches 2035.
- 1996 Editors of Bulletins in sixteen clubs entered the first contest, organised by Harry Wells, to find the best club magazine. The winner was Paul Hacking, editor of *Wayfarer*, Southport Club magazine.
- 1996 Harmony College re-locates to University College Worcester.
- 1997 Plans made for Joint Annual Convention with LABBS at Brighton in 2000.
- Jan 1999 BABS becomes a Limited Guarantee Company.
- 1999 BABS applies to Charity Commission for charitable status, which is granted.
- 1999 *Getting it Right* publication, edited by Harry Wells, issued to all clubs.
- 1999 Steve Hall announces his forthcoming retirement as BABS Field Services (Music) Officer.
- 1999 BABS Harmony Marketplace goes online.
- 1999 Club-at-Large discontinued and replaced with new status of Associate Membership.

Honours, Awards, Trophies, Medals, Cups, Lapel Badges

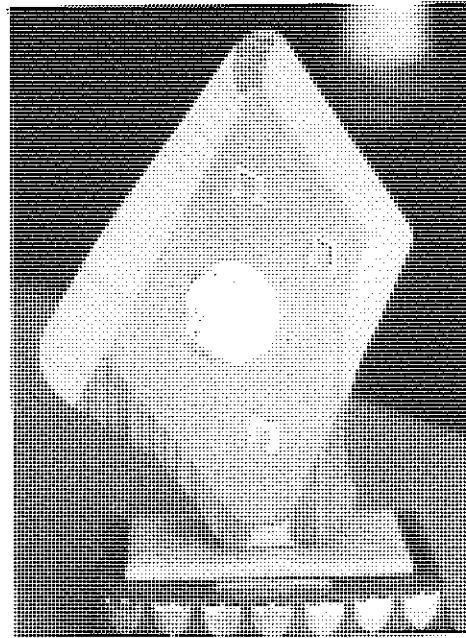
Award	Given to	Initiated
Tyneside Trophy	Champion Quartet	1975
Crawley Plaque	Champion Chorus	1975
Johnny Cairns Trophy	Club encouraging growth in barbershop	1975-76
Chorus Member Certificates	Members of first three placed choruses	1975
Gold Medal on Purple Ribbon	Champion Quartet	1976
Silver Medal on Red Ribbon	Second placed quartet	1976
Bronze Medal on Yellow Ribbon	Third placed quartet	1976
Sterling Burrows Trophy	Top Stage Presence Quartet	1977-92
Sheng Pitchpipe	Best Novice Quartet	1978
Bristol Cup	Second Placed Chorus	1978
Jim Carter (Reading) Trophy	Best Small Chorus	1978
New Chorus Award	Best first time competing chorus-Skegness	1979
Octet Award	First Placed Octet – Skegness	1979
Lapel Badges	Champion Chorus Members	1980
Hon Membership of BABS	Dr Bob Johnson	1982
Wearside Trophy	Third Placed Chorus	1982
Merrick Hine Award	Youngest (aggregate age) quartet	1982
Michael Sides Rosebowl	Silver Medal Quartet	1985
Official Badge of Office	BABS Chairman	1985
Hon Membership of BABS	Joe Liles	1989
Club of the Century (Jim Ramsey) Trophy	Club with 100(+) members	1991
Vocal Gentry Trophy	Seniors' Quartet Champions	1991
Lapel Badge	Seniors' Quartet Champions	1991
Excellence in PR Awards	Club PRO's	1993
Hon Membership of BABS	Mel Knight	1996
Magazine Editor Shield	Editor of Best Club Magazine	1996
Cambridge Scroll	Most Improved Chorus	1998
Silver Jubilee Medal	Past Chairmen of BABS	1999
Founders Pin	Original members of founding clubs	1999
25 Year Pin	For 25 years membership of BABS	1999
Ian Stone Trophy	Bronze Medal Quartet	1999

Trophies Gallery

Some Trophies and Date First Awarded



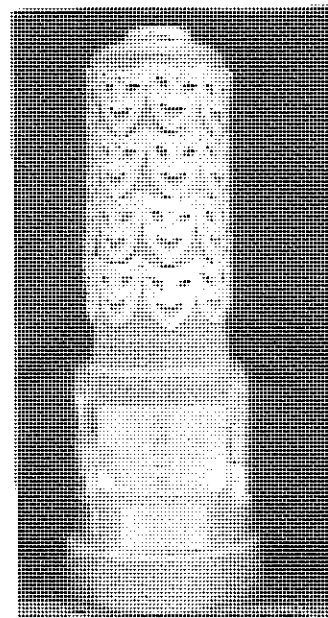
Tyneside Trophy
Champion Quartet
1974



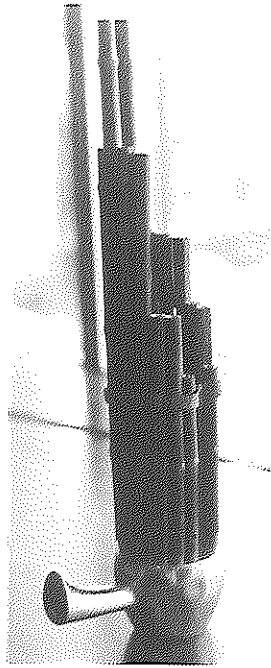
Crawley Plaque
Champion Chorus
1975



Sterling Burrows Trophy
Best Stage Presence Quartet
1977



Sterling Burrows Trophy
Best Stage Presence Chorus
1977



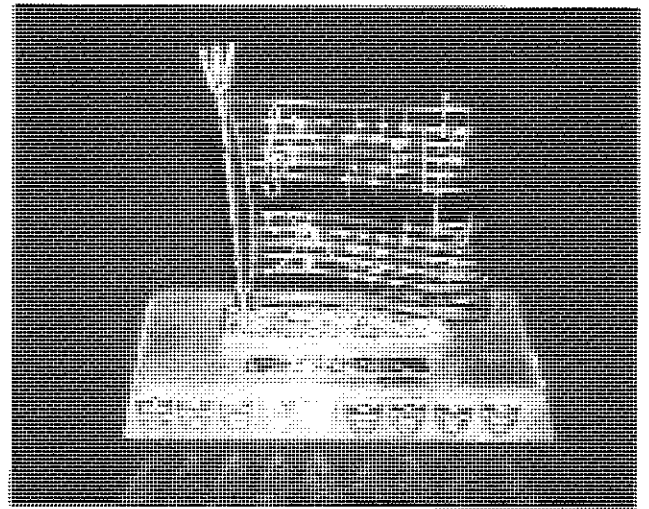
Sheng Pitchpipe
Best Novice Quartet
1978



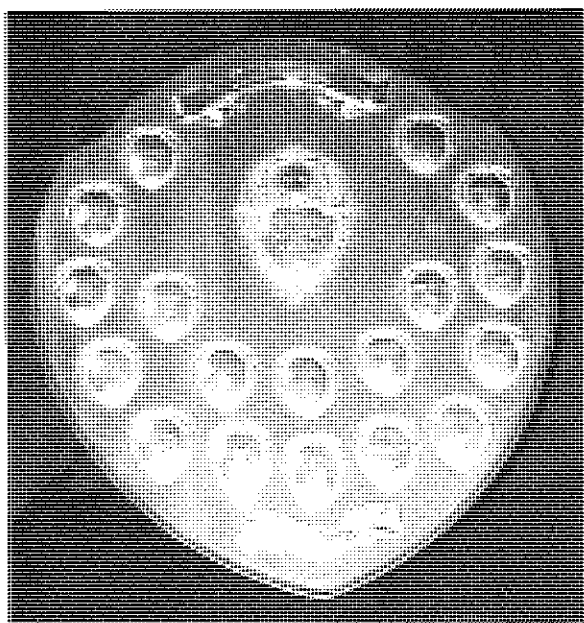
Bristol Trophy
2nd Placed Chorus
1978



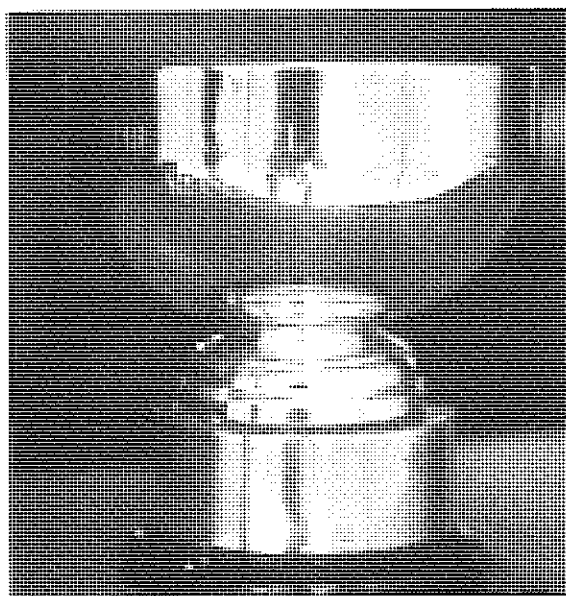
Jim Carter Trophy
Best Small Chorus
1978



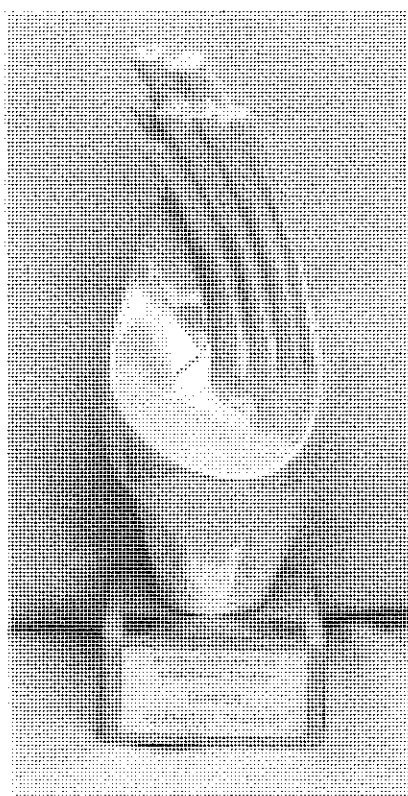
Wearside Trophy
Third Placed Chorus
1982



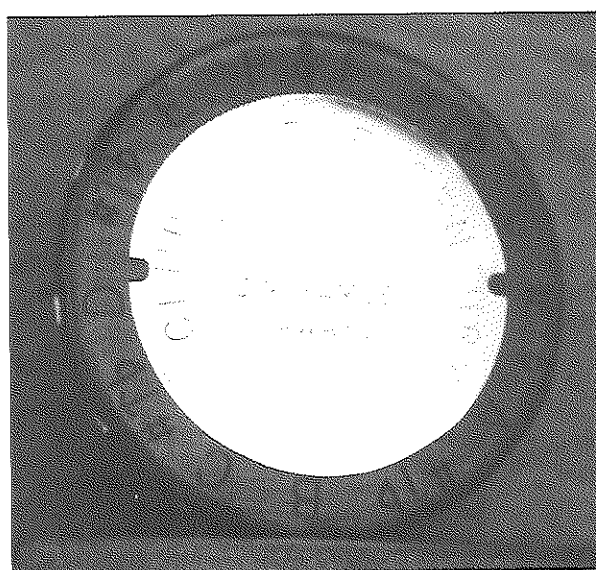
Merrick Hine Trophy
Youngest Quartet
1982



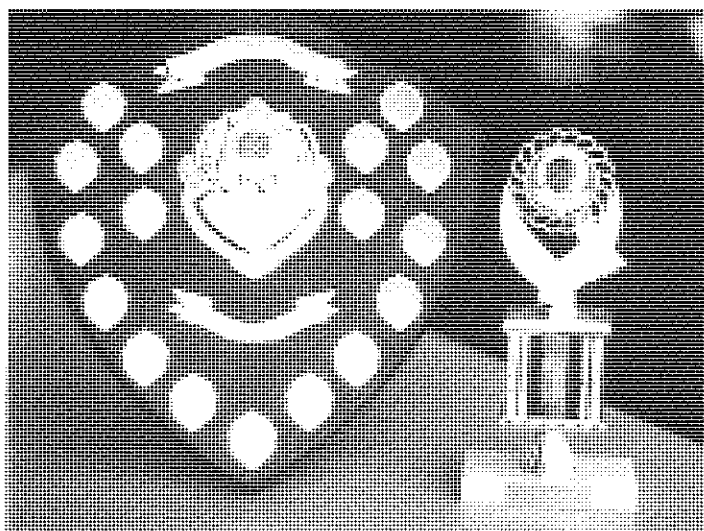
Michael Sides Rosebowl
Second Placed Quartet
1985



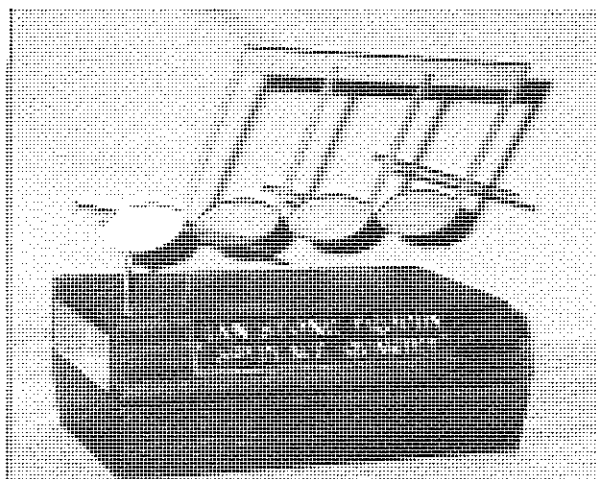
Vocal Gentry Trophy
Seniors' Quartet Champions
1991



Jim Ramsey Trophy
Club of the Century
1991



Magazine Editor Shield
1996



Ian Stone Trophy
Third Placed Quartet
1999

Administrative Personnel

President

1974-76	Harry Danser-Crawley	1979-	Don Amos-Crawley
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Chairman

1974-76	Don Amos-Crawley	1985	George Stansfield-Leeds
1977	Gerry Holland-Reading	1986	Peter May-Guildford
1978	Brian Foulston-East Dorset	1987	John Wiggins-Chesham
1979	Ron Hope-Wearside	1988	Rex Walton-Leicester
1980	John Grant-Sheffield	1989-91	Phil Jones-West London
1981	Laurie Peters-Bournemouth	1992-93	Bob Walker-Crawley
1982	Ian Taylor-Bridgwater	1994-95	Tony Searle-Reading
1983	Alan Johnson-Wearside	1996	Trevor James-East Midlands
1984	Brian Wainwright-Plymouth	1997-99	Chas Owen-Hemel Hempstead

Secretary

1974	Eric Evans-Crawley	1980-81	Peter Tinker-Bristol
1974-76	Dennis Tyrell-Brighton & Hove	1982	Eric Evans-Crawley
1977	Ken Taylor (Acting)-Bristol	1983-84	John Torrible-Bristol
1978	Gerry Holland (Temp)-Reading	1985-88	Phil Jones-West London
1978-79	Brian Lockley-Leicester	1989	Don Brown-Anglesey

Treasurer

1974-77	David Logan Wood-Tyneside	1984-85	Ernest Jones-Sheffield
1978-79	Bernard Jones-Gerrard- Bristol	1986-89	Neil Sparkes-Gr Manchester
1980-83	Eric Howard-Blackpool&Fylde		

Membership Secretary

1976	Barry Devlin-Colchester	1979-90	Ian Stone-Chesham
1977	Mike Arrowsmith-Bristol	1991-95	John Leahy-Bristol
1978	John Beck-Chesham	1996-	Stuart Lines-Hemel Hempstead

Music Services and Education Co-ordinator

1982-89	Rod Butcher-West Midlands
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Head of Music Education

1990-92	Rod Butcher-West Midlands
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Field Services Officer-Music

1992-	Steve Hall-Bradford
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Public Relations Officer

1975-76	Gerry Holland-Reading	1984-88	Laurie Peters-Bmth & E Dorset
1977-79	Martin Anderson-Bristol	1989-94	Geoff Howe-Leicester
1980-81	Laurie Peters-Bmth & E Dorset	1995-96	Gerry Hughes-Bristol
1982-83	Martin Anderson-Bristol		

Music Committee Chairman / Co-ordinator

1976-79 Bob Walker-Crawley 1980-81 John Wiggins-Chesham

Supplies Officer

1977-78 Don Amos-Crawley 1989 Tony Robson-Harpenden
1979 Gerry Holland-Reading 1990-98 Denis Hann- Bmth & E Dorset
1980-81 Pete Smith-East Anglia 1990-97 John Carter-West Midlands
1982-86 John Dickin-Telford 1991-95 Chris Chapman-Sheffield
1987-88 Frank Bowles-Carshalton

Guild of Judges Chairman

1982 Bob Walker-Crawley 1990-91 Graham Lawrence-Wantage
1983 John Grant-Sheffield 1992-93 Pete Powell-Reading
1984-85 John Wiggins-Chesham 1994-95 Stuart Lines-Hemel Hempstead
1986-87 Tony Searle-Reading 1996-97 Rod Butcher-West Midlands
1988-89 Graham Starkie-Reading 1998-99 Neil Watkins-Worthing

Harmony College Organiser

1979 Bob Walker-Crawley and Roy Dawson-Stockport
1980 John Beck-Crawley 1982-92 Rod Butcher-West Midlands
1981 John Wiggins-Chesham 1993- Graham Starkie-Reading

News Sheet / Harmony Express Editor

1975 Fred Williams-Tyneside 1990-91 Colin Graham-Staines
1976 Vic Nield-Stockport 1991- Barry Nowell-Club-at-Large
1976-90 Martin Anderson-Bristol

Director of Administration

1990-96 Chas Owen-Hemel Hempstead 1997- Eddie Kidby-Milton Keynes

Director of Finance

1990 Neil Sparkes –Gr Manchester 1991- Graham Dawes-Sheffield

Director of Membership Development

1990-91 Alan Johnson-N E England 1997- Brian Sperry-Potton
1992-96 Phil Jones-West London

Director of Music Services

1990-95 Graham Starkie-Reading 1999- Mike Lofthouse-Reading
1996-98 Tony Searle-Reading

Director of Special Events

1990-94 Trevor James-Sheffield 1995- John Wiggins-Chesham

Director of Marketing

1995- Laurie Whittle-Mold

SPEBSQSA Educators who have visited UK

- 1973 Val Hicks an educational tour
- 1979 Val Hicks at Harmony College
- 1981 Joe Liles at Harmony College and educational tours
- 1982 Bob Johnson at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1983 Greg Lyne an educational tour
- 1983 Dave Stevens at Harmony College
- 1984 Burt Szabo at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1985 Tom Gentry at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1985 Bob Johnson an educational tour
- 1985 Bill Myers at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1986 Boston Consort at Harmony College
- 1986 Lloyd Steinkamp an educational tour
- 1987 Mel Knight at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1987 Steve Plumb an educational tour
- 1987 Bob Johnson an educational tour
- 1988 Ron Rockwell COTS educational tour
- 1988 Gary Stamm at Harmony College
- 1989 Bob Johnson an educational tour
- 1989 Joe Liles at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1990 Jim DeBusman at Harmony College and educational tours
- 1990 Ron Black an educational tour
- 1991 Bill Rashleigh at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1992 Ev Nau at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1993 Mel Knight at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1994 Pat Kelly at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1994 Ev Nau an educational tour
- 1994 Jim Casey at Harmony College
- 1995 Dan Naumann at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1996 Ken Bruckner at Harmony College and an educational tour
- 1996 Mel Knight Roadshow educational tour
- 1999 Kirk Young at Harmony College

SPEBSQSA Choruses and Quartets who have Visited UK

Barrie Best	1974 1976 Show Tours
Harmony Hounds	1974 Convention
Credit Chords	1974 Show Tour
East Coast Chorus	1974 Show Tour
Expression Marks	1974 Show Tour
Four Statesmen	1974 Show Tour
Good Life	1974 Show Tour
Staff Chords	1974 Show Tour
Bob Johnson	1974 Show Tour 1987 1989 Conventions
Music Men	1975 Show Tour
Canadian Heritage	1976 Show Tour
Chansonniers Chorus	1976 Show Tour
Pacificaires	1976 Show Tour
Pittsburgh 4	1976 Show Tour
Dealer's Choice	1978 1989 Conventions
Insiders	1979 1980 1983 Show Tours
Chords Unlimited	1980 Convention
California Fever	1981 Convention
Boston Common	1981 Show Tour 1983 Convention
Most Happy Fellows	1982 Convention 1990 Convention
Centre Stage	1982 Show Tour
Notewits	1982 Show Tour
Happiness Emporium	1984 Convention 1988 Show Tour
Trillium Chorus	1984 Convention and Show Tour
Pros and Cons	1984 Show Tour
Banks of the Wabash Chorus	1985 1989 Conventions
Blue Grass Student Union	1985 Convention
Four Under Par	1985 Show Tour
San Francisco Storm Door	1986 Show Tour
Classic Collection	1986 Convention
Interstate Rivals	1986 Convention 1987 Convention and Show Tour
Boston Consort	1986 Harmony College and Show Tour
Johnny Appleseed District Chorus	1986 Show Tour
Narragansett Bay Chorus	1987 Convention
Chiefs of Staff	1987 Show Tour
Side Street Ramblers	1988 Convention and Show Tour
Dejavu	1988 Show Tour
Tri City Slickers	1988 Show Tour
Tri City Chorus	1988 Show Tour
Second Edition	1989 Convention
Ambassadors of Harmony	1990 Show
Golden Chordsmen	1990 Show Tour
Accoustix	1991 1995 Convention 1999 Show
Rural Route 4	1991 Show Tour
Ritz	1993 Convention
Gas House Gang	1993 Show 1994 1997 Conventions 1997 Show Tour
Hartsmen Chorus	1994 Convention
Penn-Ohio Singers	1994 Convention
Keepsake	1994 Show Tour
Dallas Knights	1995 Convention
Vocal Majority	1995 Convention
Fred	1996 1998 Conventions
Marquis	1996 Convention
Standing Room Only	1997 1998 Conventions
Big Chicken Chorus	1998 Convention
Bank Street	1998 Show
Joker's Wild	1999 Convention
Perfect Gentlemen	1999 Convention
Phoenicians	1999 Convention
Chordiac Arrest	1999 Show

Ladies Barbershop Harmony in Great Britain

Soon after the establishment of the first five men's barbershop clubs some ladies associated with them began to form ladies' barbershop groups.

These groups were known as Sweet Adelines, but had no connection with the official organisation of that name. At the first gathering of British barbershop singers in May 1973 in Crawley, two ladies choruses and five ladies quartets sang on the evening show.

The first meeting of the then unnamed British ladies barbershop association was held in the Ocean Hotel, Brighton in December 1975, during the men's convention. Eight ladies quartets and seven ladies choruses held their own contests at this convention. The winning quartet was *Silver Chords* (Purbrook) and the winning chorus *Tyneside Ladies*.

In February 1976 the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers (LABBS) was formed. The founding choruses were the *Avon Belles* (Bristol), Brighton Ladies, *Silvertones* (Crawley), Leicester Ladies, *Reading Barberettes*, *Chordettes* (Teignmouth) and Tyneside Ladies.

The first Chairman was Janet Phillips (Leicester) but she had to resign through ill health three months later when Bunny Bainbridge (Tyneside) was elected to the post.

LABBS held their first convention at Manchester in 1979, the winning quartet being *The Minor Birds* (Reading) and the champion chorus the *Tyneside Ladies*.

As we write, LABBS has one thousand six hundred and seventy one members in fifty-two clubs and shortly will celebrate their Silver Jubilee.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF BARBERSHOP
SINGERS

ROLL OF HONOUR



Elected Honorary Life President at the A.G.M.
held in Reading University
March 1979 Don Amos



Awarded honorary membership in recognition, and with
grateful thanks, for exceptional and devoted services in
assisting the establishment, education and membership
development of the association and its members.

September 1982 Dr. Robert D. Johnson
Director of Music Education and Services, SPEBSQSA

February 1984 George Shields
M.D. East York (Toronto) Chapter, SPEBSQSA

September 1989 Joe Liles
Executive Director, SPEBSQSA

August 1993 Mel Knight
Director of Music Education and Services, SPEBSQSA

As We Write

Our remit for the book was to document the history of the first twenty-five years of barbershop in the UK. Thus the narrative ended with the Silver Jubilee Convention in 1999. Some events that have occurred during the production of the book are briefly mentioned below.

The Millennium Convention

Held in Brighton from 28 April to 1 May 2000, the Millennium Convention was a joint event with the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers. The aims of the event were 'to promote a memorable party atmosphere' and to hold separate BABS and LABBS competitions judged by mixed panels for each contest. From these results the BABS champion quartet and chorus would be decided as well as the Millennium champion quartet and chorus. (LABBS champions were decided at their own convention held in Harrogate later in the year). Groups from Sweet Adelines (UK) were invited to participate.

For this unique contest a new set of rules had been agreed. These included allowing past BABS champion quartets and the previous year's chorus champions to compete for the Millennium titles.

The event was organised jointly by Ian Taylor, BABS, and Marion Homar, LABBS, with their combined convention teams.

The quartet contest attracted a total entry of thirty. Sixteen men's quartets had qualified through Prelim contests, and there were two BABS Gold Medal and twelve ladies' quartets. The chorus competition entry comprised twenty BABS choruses that had qualified at Prelims and the previous year's champions and seven ladies' choruses.

BABS Contest Results

Quartets

- | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | The Likely Lads | Leeds & Bradford |
| 2 | High Fidelity | Portsmouth & District |
| 3 | Wheel of Harmony | West London /Reading |

Choruses

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Hallmark of Harmony | Sheffield | Steve Holden CD |
| 2 | Thames Valley Chorus | Reading | Steve Hall CD |
| 3 | Grand Central Chorus | East Midlands | Mark Burnip CD |

Joint Millennium Contest Results

Quartets

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|-------|
| 1 | Sounds Familiar | Sevenoaks/Club-at-Large | LABBS |
| 2 | Quartz Precision | Crawley/Cambridge/Brighton/Bromley/
Dallas Metro | BABS |
| 3 | Crackerjack | Leeds | LABBS |

Choruses

1	Cambridge Chord Company	Cambridge	Paul Davies CD	BABS
2	Capital Connection	West London	Stuart Sides CD	LABBS
3	Cheshire Chord Company	Lymm	Denise Lines CD	LABBS

Top of the bill on the Friday evening show was the 1999 SPEBSQSA International Silver Medallist chorus *New Tradition* from Northbrook, Illinois under the direction of Jay Giallombardo. Friday and Saturday shows featured top quartets from BABS and LABBS with Sweet Adeline champion quartet *City Lights*. The traditional *Sunday Night Champions Show* featured all six Millennium contest winners and the BABS Gold Medal Quartet and Chorus.

New Tradition presented the show *A Broadway Tradition* on Sunday afternoon. Monday morning brought *The New Tradition Experience* when the chorus gave demonstrations of a range of topics including vocal exercises and techniques, visual presentation and chorus management for the delegates.

BABS European Barbershop Convention 2001

The inaugural European Barbershop Convention was held in Glasgow in May 2001. Making his debut as Convention Manager was Brian Sperry, Director of Membership Development, who, with his team, had to cope with the first BABS convention held in Scotland combined with the UK's first European event.

Entrants for the quartet contest included two from Germany, three from Holland and three from Sweden, along with seventeen from BABS. The chorus contest comprised two German choruses, three from Holland, three from Sweden and twenty-two from BABS.

BABS National Contest Results

Quartets

1	Matrix	Cambridge/Bolton/Mold
2	The Light Industrial Choral Society	Cambridge/Peterborough
3	Soundcrew	Telford

Choruses

1	Grand Central Chorus	East Midlands	Kevan Liebling CD	
2	Cotton Town Chorus	Bolton	Michael Dargan CD	
3	Thames Valley Chorus	Reading	Steve Hall CD	

European Contest Results

Quartets

1	Jambalaya	Ronninge	Sweden	
2	Matrix	Cambridge/Bolton/Mold	BABS	
3	The Light Industrial Choral Society	Cambridge/Peterborough	BABS	

Choruses

1	Cambridge Chord Company	Cambridge	Paul Davies CD	BABS
2	Grand Central Chorus	East Midlands	Kevan Liebling CD	BABS
3	Stockholm Chord Masters	Stockholm		Sweden

Friday's *World Harmony Spectacular* show included performances by quartets and choruses representing all the European affiliate organisations, a ladies' chorus from Ireland and another from Scotland with top of the bill attraction *The Vocal Majority* representing SPEBSQSA.

On Saturday *Classic Gold* featured European men's and ladies' Gold Medallist quartets and choruses with the Dallas Knights representing SPEBSQSA. Sunday afternoon brought *The Vocal Majority Music Never Ends!* with the chorus under the direction of Jim and Greg Clancy. The final event of the convention was the *European Champions Show* when all of the contest winners performed.

Administrative Changes

- BABS was granted charitable status on 31 May 2000.
- In August 2000 the twenty-second Harmony College was Graham Starkie's last as organiser. It was yet another success for Graham and the faculty, which again included the Society Educator Jim DeBusman, Gillyanne Keayes and Nicholas Bannan headlining the event with their enthusiastic professional knowledge. During the final session, Graham was presented with a memento from the Association for the superb way he had organised the last eight Harmony Colleges, including the two changes of venue.
- Graham Dawes officially retired officially as Director of Finance at the September 2000 AGM. Steve Green took up the post at the same meeting.
- Since September 2000 *Score Sheet*, edited by Bob Walker, has expanded into a pull out colour supplement of *Harmony Express*, appearing four or five times a year.
- Barry Nowell retired as Editor of *Harmony Express* in June 2001 when his final issue was published. Paul Sherry's first issue as Editor was published in July/August 2001.
- Steve Hall retired as Field Services (Music) Officer in 2001 after ten years in the post.
- Brian Sperry stood down as Director of Membership Development at the AGM in September 2001. Phil Mobsby was elected as Director of Development at the same meeting.
- John Wiggins retired as Director of Special Events at the AGM in September 2001. Brian Sperry was elected to the post at the same meeting.

A Tribute

Ian Stone

1932 –1998

Ian was introduced to barbershop singing in 1975. Although living at Great Kingshill near High Wycombe, he worked for Kodak in Watford and was a member of their drama group who had recently put on a performance of the *Music Man*. Ian sang bass in the quartet and became hooked on the sound. Shortly after that he heard an advertisement on the radio inviting male singers to form a new club in Chesham. Ian joined and became a founder member of Chesham BHC.

With his rich bass voice he was the first bass section leader for the Chesham club and was soon to become the assistant CD and sing-out secretary. His enthusiasm for barbershop knew no bounds as he involved himself in all aspects of our hobby. He served on the BABS Executive Committee from 1979 until 1990 setting up the membership records and numbering scheme that is still used today (2003). During his period of office, Ian was either instrumental in forming or played a leading role in helping the formation of the following clubs:

Staines, West London, Milton Keynes, Harpenden, Potton and Newbury.

On top of all this activity, Ian joined the judging programme as a candidate in 1976 to train as an interpretation judge. That was in the days when the judging categories were Harmony Accuracy, Balance and Blend, Interpretation, Stage Presence and Arrangement. He qualified in 1977 and became Category Specialist for a year in 1984.

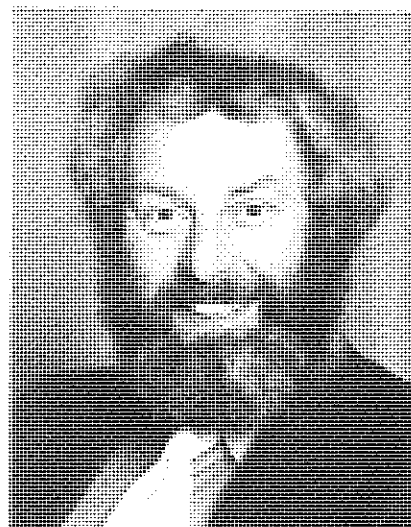
Ian formed a new ladies club in Chesham, *Chiltern Harmony*, in 1982, directing them himself for two years before handing over the baton to one of their own lady members. During these years Ian wrote some arrangements for both male and female groups. His most famous one, which he wrote for *Chiltern Harmony*, was *Red Sails In The Sunset*.

In the early years of BABS history, not many clubs could afford to import Wenger risers so Ian put his mind to designing risers made of wood. These became very successful and were not prone to squeaking with movement as happens with metal risers. Many clubs in the UK still use these risers bearing his trade name of *Top Spot*.

At the annual conventions held at the BIC Bournemouth in 1987 and 1989 an attempt was made to gain an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. BABS assembled the World's Biggest Barbershop Chorus, all of whom stood on *Top Spot* risers, provided, transported and positioned by Ian.

What a man! It's enough to make most people tired just reading about all that work. He did it all with great joy and enthusiasm as his gift to BABS. His memory will live on through the Ian Stone Trophy, which is awarded at convention to the bronze medal quartet.

John Wiggins



A Tribute

Martin Hill
1943-2001



Martin pictured with his daughter, Janine

Barbershop singers worldwide were greatly saddened to hear of the untimely death of Martin Hill, following a courageous fight against cancer.

Martin began his singing life, along with his two older brothers Clive and Tony, as a choirboy. His first taste of barbershop singing was when his church Christmas concert featured some barbershop songs performed by a group consisting of four tenors, one lead, one baritone and one bass. In spite of this unlikely combination, Martin and his brothers were hooked, and formed a quartet, the *Hill Brothers and One Other*. Martin made contact with the Association soon after this. A meeting was arranged in May 1978 between Martin and John Grant, at that time studying in Sheffield, and the *Sheffield Barbershop Harmony Club* was formed.

Throughout the history of the club, Martin worked tirelessly, both in official capacities and as a chorus singer dedicated to the improvement in standards of performance. His positive enthusiasm coupled with sound judgement made him an irresistible force in *Hallmark of Harmony's* success. He will be remembered best, perhaps, for his superb organising of numerous Northern Preliminary Contests.

Martin had a sharp wit and a marvellous sense of fun. He was a modest man, an ordinary guy doing extraordinary things. He was much loved, respected and admired. A very special man passed our way and we are all the richer for knowing him.

A Tribute

STEVE HALL



1959-2002

Once met, Steve Hall stayed remembered. Perhaps it was because he was a big lad, with a wicked grin and a twinkling smile; perhaps it was because he was a Lancastrian and not averse to playing his John Blunt card. Most likely it was because of his infectious enthusiasm and devotion to barbershop singing; this was his life and one could not help but admire his all-round ability.

Steve's first experience of barbershop was with his home club in Stockport; next, he became a founder member of the *Greater Manchester Club*. His irrepressible personality and musicality brought him to chorus directing, initially at Bradford and then with the championship-winning Sheffield chorus. In 1998 he came south to lead Reading's *Thames Valley Chorus*.

In his short life, Steve achieved an international reputation over three continents; he was a prolific arranger and had an insatiable desire to be at the leading edge of both chorus and quartet performance. His ability was legendary; his first quartet became National Champions in 1980. Over the next eight years he sang in three other championship quartets, moving effortlessly between the tenor and baritone parts, his flamboyant performance style and acute listening skills made him a 'natural'.

It was perhaps the ten years Steve spent as Field Service Officer Music for BABS, when he made regular trips to clubs throughout the country helping them to enjoy and improve their singing that won him most admirers. For Steve, all his birthdays came at once when he was awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Scholarship, which enabled him to travel to the USA and stay for seven 'heavenly' weeks. He studied American barbershop techniques at the New Orleans International Convention and at Harmony College St Joseph, Missouri spending the rest of the time with the 'staffers' at Kenosha.

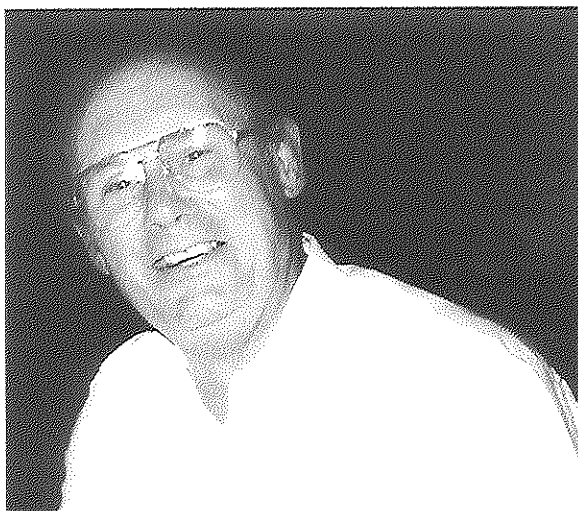
Steve always enjoyed life to the full and in later years settled down to family life with Rhiannon and Whitney; his sudden demise was a blow to us all but for them it was an especially cruel loss. Steve leaves behind a legacy of arrangements that are his permanent memorial. His most notable is the arrangement of the international Barbershop standard *Give Me A Barbershop Song* by Roy Dawson, who adds his own poetic praise of Steve here:

*He blazed into my life like a shooting star,
A mere youth,
Full of life, talent and roughly shaped music
And he blazed away, I ran with him
And kept his pace, but he had so much energy; and slowly,
He left me behind.
He had a race to run and a life to live
No twilight years for him,
No growing old and slowing down
No mellowing away to uselessness,
The only walking cane he was ever meant to use
Was the one he used on Stage.*

*And now I am so far behind
That he is lost to my sight
And all I have of him
Are pieces of a Comet's tail.
I stand in sudden shadows
As if I am in an eclipse
And only in this darkness
Do I realise how brightly he shone.*

Graham Starkie

A Tribute



Don Amos
1928-2002

There is no pleasure in saying farewell to any of my old barbershop buddies, least of all one who I 'grew up' with, and looked upon as my mentor and a great friend, Don Amos.

I was very fortunate in knowing Don from 'Day 1'—and even before that! We started BABS with a blank sheet, and under Don's chairmanship that onerous task was accomplished in a very long meeting at Heathrow back in 1974.

Don had to chair a group of highly charged individuals, each with his own agenda and determined to be heard—not an easy job. He handled it with his usual cheery aplomb and kept us to the work in hand when things started to wander off the point.

Don was rightly elected Life President after his term as the first Chairman of BABS and from that day until he left us he always had the Association's interests at heart—no one could have done it better and it will be our loss for some time to come.

We will carry on and, hopefully, go from strength to strength in the future - a future made available to us by almost thirty years of Don's tenacity and wisdom – don't let's waste it.

Gerry Holland

Afterglow

In concluding the writing of our twenty-five year history, we must express our gratitude to the pioneers who provided the foundations upon which we have built. How can we thank fully the great quartets and choruses of the Association and the Society for their legacy of musical memories?

We must also thank the coaches, arrangers, judges, chorus directors and educators who have given their time and talents for better singing. Special mention must be made of our appreciation for the Society Educators who have brought their wealth of knowledge and experience to our Harmony Colleges, educational events and tours around the clubs.

To those elected and appointed officers and committee members at club and national level we offer our sincere respect and gratitude. Surely the meetings, letter writing and phone calls were worth it after all.

Thank you to the unsung heroes, and every club has them, who week after week set out the chairs, brew the tea, wash up and clear away, put up and take down the risers and who volunteer for the many extra tasks that make club life run smoothly.

Perhaps most importantly of all, our love and gratitude to those patient, long suffering wives, sweethearts and families. Thank you all for your encouragement, co-operation, tolerance, love and support.

Finally, we would be nothing without composers, lyricists and their songs. The world would be a cold, dreary place with no music.

*When the afterglow's over and everyone's gone and harmony's still in the air,
We can smile and reflect on the wonderful songs and the wonderful pastime
we share.*

It only takes one to bask in the sun and it's great if you play solitaire,

There's a chess game for two and a tennis match, true,

There's a lot you can do as a pair.

A trio can play modern music all day but the mem'ries don't stay very long.

Only when you have four, not one less, not one more,

Can you sing a barbershop song.

(A Barbershop Song –words and music by Richard W. Brandlon –1989)

So, thank you, songwriters. Your creative gifts enrich, enliven and temper our lives. Through your craft we can continue to enjoy the wonderful hobby of singing barbershop harmony and try to

Keep the Whole World Singing

The Author and the Editor



Alan Johnson (l)

Having enjoyed harmony singing since his teens, Alan joined *Tyneside Barbershop Harmony Club* in February 1973. In May 1974, he and Ron Hope founded the *Sunderland Barbershop Club*, later renamed *Wearside Barbershop Harmony Club*. Alan won four bronze and two silver chorus medals, finally winning his gold chorus medal when the *Roker Peers of Harmony* became champions in 1982.

A founder member of the British Association of Barbershop Singers, he sang bass in the *County Chords* quartet competing in the first Association quartet contest at the Newcastle Convention in July 1974 and later sang baritone in competing quartets *Border Blend* and *4th of July*.

In 1982 Alan was elected to serve on the BABS Executive Committee, becoming Chairman in 1983. After his term in office ended he was co-opted back onto the Executive Committee for the next five years, with responsibility for Membership Development. During this time he set up Area Counselling and Club Officer Training courses and in 1989 was elected Director of Membership Development. On retirement from this post he became Manager of New and Non BABS Clubs. Between 1990 and 1996, in co-operation with PRO Geoff Howe and Director of Membership Development Phil Jones, Alan played a part in bringing some thirteen clubs into registration with the Association. In co-operation with Phil Jones and Steve Hall, he set up and organised the Mel Knight Roadshow.

He was instrumental in setting up the Association Seniors' Quartet Championship Contests and in 1991 sang baritone in the *Whatever Four* quartet. In 1997 Alan sang baritone in the *Bifocal Minority* quartet, when they won the Seniors' championship (only two quartets had entered).

He is an eight-year member of the Frank Thorne (SPEBSQSA) Chapter, a twenty-three year member of AHSOW (Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders) an officially recognised subsidiary of SPEBSQSA. Alan is an Associate Member of BABS and was appointed BABS Historian in 1998.

Like Harry Wells, his dearest wish would be to sing again in a barbershop quartet.

Harry Wells

Harry's barbershop singing started shortly after his son, John, joined *Humber Harmony* in Humberside. Since he was a boy, Harry had been singing in church and male voice choirs but had always leaned towards close harmony. Crowding in on a son's activities, as most parents know, is not to be advised and he quietly ate his heart out for a week or two until John said, 'You ought to join, Dad'. Harry lost no time in doing so.

After leaving *Humber Harmony* to join the club at Lincoln he went on to *Hallmark of Harmony* where he won his silver and gold chorus medals.

Many of you will have seen Harry's productions of *Convention Express* and souvenir programmes at a number of conventions. He also edited and produced for the Association, the booklet *Getting It Right from the Start*.

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Please note that subjects in the Archive Section and quartets, choruses and personnel in the Barbershop Galleries are not included in the index.



Roy Dawson

Roy's varied musical career was revolutionised in 1973 by a television documentary about barbershop singing in the USA. Finding that there were only four clubs in the UK, and none nearer than two hundred miles away, Roy, greatly helped by Sam Kennedy, formed his own club in Stockport in May 1974.

Roy has served BABS over a number of years in several official capacities. He has competed in several quartets, winning two silver and two gold medals. A prolific songwriter and arranger, Roy was honoured in May 1995 in recognition of the success and popularity of his song *Give Me a Barbershop Song*. He was presented with a framed copy of the song manuscript. Roy has composed and arranged many other barbershop songs.

Back cover photograph insets show Roy Dawson (top) and Harry Danser (bottom)



old bar - ber - shop song that I can

sing blue. Croon me a tune that will

soon take my wor - ries a - way,

Some-thing with rhy- thm, not too stark

a thrill

thrill, don't give me jazz

