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THE RAG AND NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

Geoff Sassé's Iris in full bloom at Kibblewhite Crescent



ASIMOV conducting THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

READING BARBERSHOP HARMONY CLUB

A LOOK AHEAD TO

JUNE 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 Rehearsal	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Rehearsal TAG RAG COPY DEADLINE	11 Daytimers at Bray Disabled Club	12	13	14
15	16	17 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 Rehearsal	25	26	27	27
29	30	June 2008				

**Calendars showing the remaining days of May 2008 and the month of July 2008
are at the back of TAG RAG**

MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY * indicates an addition or update to last month's Tag Rag

2008	MAY	23-25	Fri-Sun	Full Chorus	BABS Annual Convention The Centaur Building Cheltenham Racecourse
	JUN	11	Wed	Daytimers	Bray Disabled Club 1pm for a 2pm sing
	JUL	19	Sat	Daytimers	Woodcote Crowthorne at 2.30
*	JUL	20	Sun	Full Chorus	Ferrari Fun Day - to be confirmed
	AUG	6	Wed	Daytimers	Thamesfield House Henley sing at 2.45
	AUG	15	Fri		Dot & Meyrick's Wedding Calcot Hotel Bath Road
*	AUG	19	Tue	Full Chorus	RHS Wisley for National Gardens Scheme - evening No Piggott School rehearsal
*	AUG	22-24	Fri-Sun		BABS Harmony College Nottingham
	SEP	17	Wed	Daytimers	Christchurch Court, Christchurch Road Reading 1pm for 2pm
*	SEP	20	Sat	Full Chorus	2x40min spots - Corn Exchange Theatre Wallingford.
	OCT	11	Sat	Daytimers+	All Saints Church Wokingham Harvest Supper Cornerstone Hall at 8.30pm for 30 mins
	DEC	3	Wed	Daytimers	Kennet Court Woosehill Wokingham at 2pm
*	DEC	6	Sat	Full Chorus	Christmas Show Desborough Suite Maidenhead Matinee & Evening Performances
	DEC	10	Wed	Daytimers	Thamesfield House Henley sing at 2.45
	DEC	17	Wed	Daytimers	Chequers Hotel Newbury
2009	MAR	5	Thu	Daytimers	Twyford Townswomens Guild
	MAR	7-8	Sat-Sun		Away Weekend 2009 Bournemouth

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NEXT COPY DEADLINE:

10TH JUNE FOR 17TH DISTRIBUTION

CHAIRMAN'S SPOT

Your Chairman hasn't contributed to Tag Rag for a couple of months. As I have said before, writing does not come easy to me. But this time has not been uneventful, so here's a brief review of events.

As you may be aware, Andy Pearce stepped down from the executive committee last December. He had served as secretary for a number of years, and latterly had also shouldered the burden of managing our sing-outs. I am very grateful to Andy for all his positive contributions to the management of the club. Although not in a titled role, Andy continues to do a lot of work to aid the smooth running of our club, for which thanks are due.

March saw yet another successful Away Weekend in Bournemouth. The coaching was excellent, everybody worked hard, and we achieved superb results. Yet for me one of the most pleasurable aspects of those two days was the way the membership interacted during the intervals in the lounge, bar and restaurant. It was good to have the chance to relax together in a way that is seldom possible on club nights. Thanks are due to Graham for arranging everything with his usual efficiency.

Also in March, Mike, Gabi, Rhiannon and I attended the BinG! convention in Dortmund. This is a lovely city with a superb concert hall. The standard of performance from all groups was very high. Britain was represented by the White Rosettes, Cotton Town Chorus, and the LABBS champion quartet, After Hours. The competition was notable for the inclusion of mixed groups, and the winning quartet, Klangküsse, consisted of three ladies and a male

bass. With BABS, LABBS, and the Sweet Adelines undertaking more co-operative ventures, this may even be possible in this country. The German convention is every two years, so make a note in your diary for 2010 – I can recommend it.

Graham and I attended the BABS annual general meeting in Nottingham. Two new clubs were welcomed into full membership – the Sussex Harmonisers barbershop chorus and the Derby Barbershop Chorus. It was also agreed to form the Don Amos Club as an umbrella organisation for singers who for some reason could not join an established club. The new club will not compete at convention as a chorus, but individual members will be eligible to compete in quartet competition.

Harmony College will be held at Nottingham University this year. It can provide better service and facilities for the growing numbers who attend this event. Remember that the club pays a subsidy to members attending Harmony College for the first time, so why not take the plunge this year? It can only help you to enjoy this wonderful hobby.

As you know by now, next year Convention will be held in Llandudno, and Phillip has already made provisional hotel bookings for us. Again, a discounted price will be available for those who register at Cheltenham. Thereafter the price rises, and will go up again in November, to encourage early booking. In 2010, Convention returns to Harrogate (Phillip, always on the ball, has made a provisional booking at the George Swallow hotel), and in 2011 it's in Llandudno again.

Lincoln Barbershop Harmony club are to host a four-day Harmony Camp for teenagers aged 13 to 18 in August next year. It would be good to get our local schools to participate in this event. If you have any contacts who may be interested, please spread the word. In September 2009 BABS, LABBS, and the Sweet Adelines will hold a "Barbershop Week" culminating in a show at a major London theatre.

Convention is almost upon us. A few of our members have responded to Brian's invitation to help out the Magna Carta Chorus in Staines. They have made us more than welcome – another example of the wonderful spirit of fellowship in the barbershop world. As to our own efforts, it is noticeable to me, standing in the front row, how well the chorus has taken on board the coaching we have received over the past two years. I look forward to standing with you on the competition stage!

JOHN PRICE

Chairman

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EDITORIAL

Once again I give my thanks to all the contributors this month.

Many thanks to Richard Leathem for giving us his heads-up on the Convention weekend. His writings complement the What, Where and When of the Convention briefing note prepared by Phillip Ward and myself. My thanks also go to Richard for the article on Key Signatures. That is very timely because I'm sure you've all been listening to the BBC Radio 4 15minute features over the last five Sundays entitled Key Matters. These short programmes have made very enjoyable listening giving examples of music that demonstrate the feelings associated with different keys. If you've missed them why not visit the Radio 4 web site and Listen Again; they are all there. It was good to receive a tome from Bruce Beer after such a long time; Thanks Bruce.

It's Convention time again. Let's put our best-foot forward and enjoy it; we certainly have earned the opportunity. After Convention I believe we are going to have another Learn to Sing course in August and that will be followed by a Christmas show in Maidenhead's Desborough suite. The plan this year is to have both a matinee and an evening performance.

The Song learning programme is forging ahead. Now that the teaching materials for CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT are on distribution we can get straight into the song after Convention. After that great Lion King number there are three other songs in the pipeline, WHEN WILL I BE LOVED, THAT GREAT COME AND GET IT DAY and EXODUS.

I was fascinated to read about ASIMO - the world's first prototype humanoid developed by Honda. The little blighter took charge of the Detroit Symphony orchestra and directed THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM! Is this going to be the end of home-grown directors because in a few years time every barbershop chorus will have a Jim Clancy clone in front of them. It is reported that the robot mimicked the actions of a conductor, nodding its head, gesturing with both hands and took its final bow to enthusiastic shouts from the audience. A member of the orchestra is reputed to have made the comment "The movements are still a little stiff but very human like." ASIMO's picture is on the front of Tag Rag courtesy of the Daily Mail.

I hope you can get a good impression of the splendour of Geoff Sasse's Iris now in full bloom in Kibblewhite Crescent. Geoff gave the rootstock to

Irene amidst much excitement many years ago. Last year was the first year of bloom when they showed only three spays but this year they have excelled themselves. They'll look much better on the web site issue of Tag Rag.

GRAHAM STARKIE

Editor

FROM RHIANNON

Hi Guys! Well here we are again!! It's that time of the year, the focus that has occupied our time and minds so much over the last few months, the BABS annual Convention!!!

We've worked very hard together trying to improve all aspects of our Convention performance, without losing sight of the fact that the competition takes place on one day out of the whole year and we're a very busy chorus all year. This year we've tried to ensure that most of our songs are still up to the standard that we set ourselves, but it has become increasingly difficult to do this over the last few weeks!! Our energy and stamina levels have been plumbed as we've tried to respond to all that is asked of us by our coaches, Mark and Emma.

Thank you everyone for your hours of tireless work, commitment and dedication. Individually and collectively you are a wonderful group of people and I enjoy spending my time with you as often as I can, making good music!

Nevertheless, we're here, at this point in time, and we know what we have to do as a TEAM!!! TVC is one of the strongest teams I have ever come across. This will stand us in good stead over the next few days, especially when we begin the process towards the competition performance so early on Saturday morning!

We will do this together. We know what we have to do. We thrive on hard work. We know we can do it. We know we will give a brilliant performance and delight our audiences. Let's really enjoy ourselves at Convention this year and give it our best shot!!!!!!!!!!!!

Onwards and upwards.

All my love and thanks,

Rhiannon

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CONVENTION – THE THRILL OF COMPETITION

A personal thank you to all those talented people in TVC who drive us forward. We are very lucky to have Rhi as our CD. It amazes and excites me to be part of the body of the chorus as we approach competition and she conjures an exciting musical performance from us.

CONVENTION – THE YOUTH FACTOR

Unfortunately chorus members won't be able to be there first thing Saturday to hear the **National Barbershop Youth Chorus** as mike warmers. (For new members this means they are not competing but entertaining and giving the judges the chance to warm up their pens.) **Cottontown**, the current champs, are the “mike coolers” as they say – they sing last and do not compete. Compare them with the youth chorus and maybe take the opportunity to sing with them for fun – see programme.

The screams at International Convention for the **Westminster Chorus** indicated the enthusiasm of the ladies; at least I hope it was just the ladies screaming. They were by far the youngest chorus to win gold. The CD Royce Ferguson seemed to be the same age as his chorus even though he is rather older. That must be the effect of working with young people. There also seems to be a degree of indulgence in youth which allows them to get away with things for which older singers lose points (or more points) in the judging. We instinctively want to encourage young people.

Time for TVC to form a youth group?

CONVENTION – CHORUSES

Convention is a time to revel in the sound of Barbershop singing and to enjoy the performances of choruses and quartets from all over the chorus. Here are some of them who will appear between 9.30 and 6,00 pm Saturday:-

Grand Central Chorus from East Midlands will be desperate to win gold after 3 silver medals in a row. I loved the sweet soft parts of “Over the Rainbow” from their performance last year.



Great Western Chorus including our old mate Simon from the TVC will very much be up for it this year. They worked at reconstructing their club and in 2006 got to the final of choir of the year. They are hoping to improve on their bronze medal.



No Cambridge Chorus (phew) – they will be back next year I assume.

Royal Harmonics - Windsor club (and our Jim) will be up for it and I suspect with a song they practiced last year and worked on with a top US coach. John Palmer has just become their CD so that should give them a boost. John has coached us in the past.

Hallmark of Harmony from Sheffield are putting in 4 days of extra rehearsals in their build up including a Saturday and Sunday before convention – boy are they serious about competition. That is probably why they have been champions 6 times. This is their photo below but I have to say that our picture with Rhi in her red dress and Andy in top

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hat and bow tie looks better than any other club.



ARE BARBERSHOP CHOIRS AMONGST THE BEST?

Yes they are. Cambridge won Choir of the World and The White Rosettes won Choir of the Year. Some of those who are through in the current Choir of the Year competition are Signature (the ladies champs who sang at our Christmas show, our champs the Cottontown Chorus from Bolton and the BABS National Youth Chorus. The finals will be Sat-Sun 8&9 Nov probably in Cardiff. Phoenix the Reading choir are also through.

THE SHOWS

We will have the top choruses and quartets from the UK but also the Toronto Northern Lights who are a top performing international chorus from Canada. For me their sound is brilliant.

CONVENTION - QUARTETS

Quartet singing is tough but fun. This year the quartet competition is Friday evening for the semi final (Catch 22 are on about 8pm and Figaro at 10.09). **Some support would be greatly appreciated.** 17 quartets compete for the Sunday morning final. This means only about a third will get through to the final – I feel nervous already. I was told that one of the best basses ever in the UK used to be sick before he went on stage. The best thing to settle the stomach is to hear your mates from the other side of the curtain – even if it is abuse!

So **Figaro** will be trying hard (Peter, Andy, Aidan & Richard) and for the first time for a while we also have **Paul, Simon and Big Andy** doing their bit in a new quartet – Catch 22 - with John from Windsor. **Peter Kennedy** formerly of the TVC and tenor with By Appointment is coaching Figaro at the moment.

DB4 ought to be the winner after last year because the quartets who came above them are out. However that is not how it works. Former medallists re-form. These include the likely winners – Evolution, and the others in the top three. Evolution are working hard at performance and promotion – see the current national magazine.

After the first three, only 2% of the marks separated the next 4 quartets including Figaro. They were:-

Evolution
Monkey Magic
Qube
Rough Cut
dB4
The Questionables
Figaro

A long time ago (it seems now) I suggested we enhance our web site to make it into a library. I had a discussion with one of the members of Toronto NL who owned an IT company. He was putting material onto a web site for their members including updates on performance so that if they missed a meeting they could catch up. We started to create a facility and thanks to team efforts including Chris, Lawrence and Andy Pearce we could not be better placed. We have magnificent resources available to us including Tag Rag (thanks to Graham). Through Alex and Bob Ridley we even had an updated moves sheet by email within an hour of leaving rehearsal on Sunday – WOW!

CHELTENHAM

Cheltenham is a smart city with attractive Regency buildings. However the tourist web site is more about what is outside the city! Babs web site gives excellent details about the Centaur – the racecourse building we are using which has good facilities but what about the rest and where is the Centaur in relation to the town centre? It is outside the main town and a serious hike so bus details are below from the BABS web site but watch it! My enquiries

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say the 10 minute service is only Monday – Saturday and what about late? I am enquiring.

If the weather is nice try **Pittville Park** at the northern end of the town which has two scenic lakes, flower beds, **Pittville Pump Room** where spa water can still be tasted and also a *Gallery of Fashion*.

Pubs? – THE PRINCE OF WALES (in Portland Street) surely Cheltenham's best traditional public house. It's a Scream - Cheltenham's biggest, packed on Friday and Saturday nights O'Hagan's opposite Sandford Park

Restaurants? – Lots of them but the smart ones are expensive. The facilities at the Centaur look OK for dining.

Thanks to those choruses mentioned above for their photos.

RICHARD LEATHEM

GIFT AID TO BABS

Each year the Club pays, from the subscription of each member, a capitation fee to BABS. Now that BABS is a charity, they have invited each member to sign the form that Ken Mills has which authorises BABS to treat this capitation fee as a Gift Aid donation to them.

If you complete a tax return, you may wish to include this amount in the section headed Gift Aid. In the 2007-8 tax year RBHC sent BABS £37 per full member as a Gift Aid donation.

BOB RIDLEY

FROM SYD SEWARD

On April 22nd it was my birthday. May I say how very surprised I was to receive a card from the Club signed by everyone, and on the front "85". (Perhaps Irene may like to amend her last month's statement!)

On the 30th April my very cherished daughter, Marguerite, was taken from this world.

Again thanks to the Club and others connected with it for their sympathy given to me and my wife Barbara.

What a Club it is to be a member of.

SYDNEY SEWARD



BARBERSHOP BABES

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO
MAY'S TRIO**

**MERVYN CLARK
RHIANNON HALL
MAURICE SCOTT**

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Most of us (me included) don't think of a key as more than just the bleep to give the start reference note. I know I don't listen carefully enough so I decided to explore the world of keys. As we know, "Key" just refers to the note that the scale starts on, known as the tonic. Typically it's the note we come back to throughout the tune and especially at the end. If a tune uses notes from the C major (diatonic) scale, it's in the key of C major. I just know that Barbershop Song is in C.

Here are some keys with descriptions by composers.

C Major

Completely Pure. Its character is innocence, simplicity.

C Minor

A declaration of love and at the same time the lament of unhappy love.

Db Major

A leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture. It cannot laugh, but it can smile; it cannot howl, but it can at least grimace its crying.--Consequently only unusual characters and feelings can be brought out in this key.

C# Minor

Penitential lamentation, intimate conversation with God, the friend and help-meet of life; sighs of disappointed friendship and love lie in its radius.

D Major

The key of triumph, of Hallejuahs, of war-cries, of victory-rejoicing. Thus, the inviting symphonies, the marches, holiday songs and heaven-rejoicing choruses are set in this key.

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D Minor

Melancholy womanliness, the spleen and humours brood.

Eb Major

The key of love, of devotion, of intimate conversation with God.

D# Minor

Feelings of the anxiety of the soul's deepest distress, of brooding despair, of blackest depression, of the most gloomy condition of the soul. Every fear, every hesitation of the shuddering heart, breathes out of horrible D# minor. If ghosts could speak, their speech would approximate this key.

To be continued

RICHARD LEATHAM



ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS

By BOB RIDLEY Acting Assistant to the Associate Member Coordinator

I called in to see Ron and Stella Collis on 15 May and had a long chat with them. Since the last TagRag, Ron has had a visit from the wheelchair expert from Newbury social services. Ron was hoisted into a wheelchair and wheeled through his kitchen and into the new conservatory for a short visit. Ron was overwhelmed to see these and his new garden for the first time. It is hoped that this can be repeated if the necessary additional carers can be found. Gerry Holland and his wife had visited Ron and when I arrived Ron was listening to a barbershop quartet CD that Gerry had brought him. Both Ron and Stella were interested in our preparations for Convention 2008. They send their best wishes to TVC. Ron and Stella would welcome more visitors but please phone first. The early afternoons are probably the best time.

For the first time for a while no new letters had arrived from the Associate Members but I am sure that we will all be able to greet many of them in Cheltenham.

TagRag is available on our website www.rbhc.org.uk thanks to the efforts of Graham Starkie and Chris Bradley.

Thank you to all the Associate Members for their continuing support.

SELECTED WEEKLY NOTICES

CONVENTION TIMINGS (15 May)

The Chorus Contest now starts ONE HOUR EARLIER than previously published. After much deliberation the Performance Team have agreed the following schedule. The times in bold are the official BABS Contest times.

Estimate of time that Day visitors will leave Reading	05:00
Breakfast for Hotel residents, Change, Share admin and NO Makeup.	07:00
Vocal Exercises	07:45
Contest Package run thro's	08:30
Leave hotel in coach	09:00
Arrive at Convention Hall	09:15
Dressing Room IN	09:20
Report Time	09:40
Warmup Room B IN	09:45
Warmup Room B OUT	10:05
Hold point	10:10
On-stage	10:15
Dressing Room OUT	11:00

CAN YOU FEEL ...(15 Apr)

CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT (from Elton John/Tim Rice's "The Lion King") is now issued as a diversion to the concentration on the Convention songs. Get your named score from Andy Pearce. The song is inspirational and fairly easy to learn. The professional mp3 are available on the Learn to Sing web site and the tracks are available to download into your players from Ian McCann. Rod Adams will take your orders for a CD.

RHS WISLEY SINGOUT (15 Apr)

We have secured a repeat showing at the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley on Tuesday 19th August. The programme will be the same as last year - 2 half-hour spots between 6-9pm in the same place in front of the glass house. Tuesday night's rehearsal will be cancelled for that evening.

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DAYTIMERS' REHEARSAL (29 Apr)

Thanks to Sean O'Shea and Peter Dawson the Daytimers enjoyed a good two hours of rehearsal at the Parkside International hotel on Thursday of last week. Plans are in hand to organise another when the Convention activities subside.

ALEXANDER DEVINE CHARITY(29 Apr)

I helped to move some more furniture successfully for the charity last Thursday. The (nearly full) vanload was of cupboards and chairs from Fujitsu in Bracknell. Letter of thanks follows.

21 April 2008

Dear Graham

I just want to thank you for your help shifting furniture last week, as well as the use of your van again. It was very kind of you and we appreciate your support and efforts on our behalf.

We are very grateful to have supporters like you
Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
Stevie Horton

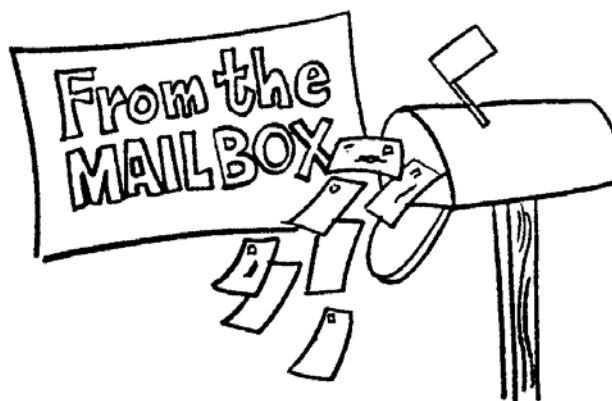
QUARTETS IN COMPETITION (13 May)

Gerry Holland, a founder member and currently an Honorary Member of RBHC, presented a set of tankards in 1975 to be awarded annually to the Club quartet achieving the highest position in that years competitions.

Aidan Brand has recently suggested that the rules be clarified to allow quartets to compete for these trophies with three members of the Club and one member of another Club. Both Figaro and Catch 22 have qualified for the BABS semifinals this year. Figaro members are Richard Leathem, Andy Rzysko, Peter Dawson & Aidan Brand. Catch 22 members are Paul Gordon, Andy Wheeler, Peter (Windsor) & Simon Laight.

The Executive Committee endorsed this suggestion and Gerry Holland has kindly agreed to the change. We wish both quartets every success in Cheltenham.

John Price
Chairman



HE LIVES!

Is he dead – no, has he run out of things to say – never, can he still put pinky to keyboard – yes, well “why hasn’t he written to Tag Rag for such a long time” I hear many people shout. Mind you that is probably drowned by the people shouting “who the heck is he anyway and why should we care!”

Well, I prefer to think of the first option, even though the number of people with whom I have never sung is increasing rapidly. I notice from April’s Tag Rag that Sid Seward is 86 – good lord how did that happen, he was young and spritely when I was with TVC.

Anyway, an interesting TR this month (as always), and I, like the rest of you, will mark Easter 2160 in my diary (and also on my email calendar so I don’t forget it).

I would really like to add my comments about song teaching materials. Despite a resounding “Oh No!”, here is my 2 cents worth, which by the way is worth a heck of a lot less than it was when I first came to the States 13 years ago.

The VM have a huge turnover of songs – I was speaking to our pitch-pipe blower after a concert last Saturday and he said we had sung 75 different songs during the last 12 months (no wonder the brain cell is overloaded!). Anyway, the only reason we can possibly achieve the level of song turnover and the standard that we do is by having first rate learning CDs (used to be called teach tapes in the dark ages). I know I may have rattled on about this in one of my previous tomes, but IMHO it is absolutely vital to have high quality learning tracks if you want to learn songs quickly and accurately. Our learning CDs (now distributed on our website along with dots, which means I can pick up new stuff even when I am travelling around the States on business) are usually done by 2 of our section leaders, Greg Clancy and Jeff Oxely (both from MaxQ). We have had several learning CDs done by all of MaxQ which are so good it is sometimes

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difficult to learn from them because you are enjoying the sound so much. I digress – Jim Clancy works with the people doing the CD, and puts in all the interp he wants the final song to have. We then get our sticky hands on the tracks and learn it parrot-fashion, so when we rehearse it we already have all the interp down cold, so it only takes a few minor tweaks by Jim to get it up to performance level. We have recorded songs for a CD just 2 weeks after having the dots and learning tracks – not to be advised, and pretty risky, but occasionally necessary. The main point about a good learning CD is that firstly it is sung by real people, singing actual words, using the almost final interp – makes it as easy as possible to learn. How people manage to learn anything from learning CDs that just use an organ totally defeats me – I couldn't because words are my great problem not the notes. Anyway, I have probably bored the one reader left by this stage, so I am probably speaking to myself by now.

What is this horror I read in TR about starting the competition earlier in the morning! This sounds very un-British to me. For anyone travelling at 5.00 in the am, this is a double whammy – you will have to get up at 4.55 to be ready to leave at 5.00, then travel, then sing at peak performance level – doesn't sound too great to me.

I note Bob's section on Health and Safety – a very sensible thing to put in TR. Our Chorus Manager who looks after all the rookies shifting risers at the end of every rehearsal, and transport of risers and uniforms to and from singouts recently chopped off the end of one of his fingers when a riser folded quicker than he expected and acted like a pair of scissors on his finger. He took a lot of well meaning humor over that. Have you heard of the American expression "Give me five", well of course people now ask him to give them four and a half etc. etc. Since then the club has bought a whole bunch of tough work gloves for those moving risers to wear to prevent a similar occurrence in future.

Anyway, to change the subject somewhat, via this tome, I would like to wish Ron and Stella all the very best, and hope they are settling down well in their new house. When we fly into the UK we normally stay the first night with some good friends of ours in Tilehurst, and as we crest the hill by the water tower, we usually wave at Ron's house (ex-house now). I can imagine the new occupiers in future wondering who the heck is waving at them and why!

I was very impressed to read about the run up to convention and the hoops you have to go through to sing on the competition stage – it is bound to improve your performance level.

While reading Rhi's ABCD report, it reminds me of the problems when crossing conductors from BBS to orchestral and vice versa. With BBS the bottom of the down stroke is the signal to do something, but with orchestral conductors it has changed to be the top of the upstroke. This can be funny to watch as demonstrated whenever Jim conducts us with an orchestra. We sang in San Angelo last weekend with their professional orchestra, and when they were due to start off, Jim conducted and you could almost see the panic in his face when they don't come in when he expects them to, they then come in when his hands reach the top of their trajectory, by which time Jim is wondering why everything is so quiet!! OK I exaggerate a bit because he is more used to it now, but there is still that fraction of a second of silence when he and we wonder why it is so quiet.

I get an increasing feeling of tremendous old age when I clearly remember the gig 15 years ago with the RAF – it was a big deal and very enjoyable. Then I read that 20 years ago, KVCC (a great and perfectly formed quartet!) won the semi final round of a radio BBS contest by being the only competitors. I still have an audio tape of our radio performance and one day I will play it to MaxQ as an example of the level they could reach with practice, dedication, and improvement in their singing! Not only that, but then I read about the convention 25 years ago – which I think was my first ever BBS competition ever (and now I have 4 international gold medals!). I must go and have a nap in my bath chair I feel so ancient.

Anyway, did you all see my photo (looking as dapper as ever) in Harmony Express recently? As you will all remember, I came to the UK for 8 weeks in October/November last year, mainly to be with my mother for an extended time, but also to do some work to pay for the ridiculous cost of petrol you have over there. Well the two pieces of work I had planned to teach in Wokingham both fell through, so I didn't have the chance to visit you – I know, you could hardly bear my absence.

Well I did go to Pershore BHC for 5 consecutive weeks – I have been around that club ever since my father joined them some 35 years ago. I spent the first session just listening to them and making notes on potential areas of improvement, then spent a session with their CD to review my observations, agree priorities and how we would work together. The next 4 rehearsals I worked with them and their CD on improvement. They were so receptive and responsive it was really great. We focused on the basic facts that there are 3 key points in the song that have the biggest impact on the score or audience

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perception. The 10 seconds or so before a sound is made where you set up the mood of the song and set audience/judge expectation of what is going to hit them when you start to sing. Then there is the first 10-15 seconds of the song, then the last 10-15 seconds of the song.

They learnt and demonstrated a great understanding, of the value of setting up the song properly, then the importance of the first note (must be absolutely in tune, confident, matching tone quality, same vowel sound etc. etc.) and the next 9 – 14 seconds where you establish the basic quality of the chorus. The next important area is how you finish the song, leaving the audience and judges with a reminder of how good you are. In tune singing, no over-singing, selling the mood you want to leave them with, vowel matching etc. etc. to leave them thinking “that was a great performance”. What goes on in the middle is important, and can ruin the initial impression if you lose the plot, but the pre-singing set up and first and last 10-15 seconds, are critical to success. I was totally astounded by how they reacted and the overall improvement in just 4 sessions – I hope they can keep improving, and with Martin Flory as their regular coach, this should be achievable. Anyway, both they and I thoroughly enjoy working as hard as we did, and it seemed to make a significant difference to their performance.

I hear drunken mumblings emanating from those of you that have had a bit too much of the amber fluid to see you through this tome, to the effect of “how is the VM doing these days”. Well we had our first competition for the July 2009 International late last March something like 16 months before the competition. Yes you did read correctly. The Division contest is held to qualify all competitors that reach or exceed a certain number of points to go onto the next level – District – where the winners then progress to International in 2009.

We sang 2 songs we had competed with in previous years, and we scored just over 92 overall. It would have been a bit higher if our singing scores had not been lower than usual (unacceptable according to Jim & Greg). We have all sorts of excuses such as a long walk from the changing room to the stage, outside, in a cold wind, then straight onto the stage, and other such inane excuses, but basically because of this I think we lost focus and were not up to our usual standard. What this means of course is that Jim and Greg will put “quite a bit of effort” into making sure we improve our singing score significantly by the time we compete in the Division competition in October!! I can feel the strokes of the whip already!

This is our “off year” where we are not performing as a chorus at International. For the last 3 decades we have had one of these every 3 years when we are neither competing nor doing our swan song performance. I will probably watch the competitions on the webcast just to see how it goes. You can't get any closer than last year (dead heat for the top two choruses) but it is going to be fascinating to see whether the Masters will beat the Ambassadors (and other up and coming choruses) this year. The main interest will be that if the masters do not win, there will be a head to head between them and us in 2009 – the first time for gazillions of years. If the Ambassadors do not win they will be baying for blood after the dead heat last year the loss this year. Whatever the result, the competition gets stronger and stronger each year and we will have to be really on top of our game to win in 2009. I love competition years, it really gets the old adrenaline working.

Talking about convention, I would like to wish all of you all the very best of luck on May 24th – go break a few legs or something.

Well I had better totter off to have a lie down after re-living all the memories of my time with TVC and the thought of all the effort we will need to put in before the next International – I am feeling old and exhausted.

Again, all the very best for Convention in May – I will be thinking of you.

All the very best to y'all,
Pip pip for now,
BRUCE BEER



HISTORICAL NOTES

5 Years Ago May 2003

9th Full Chorus at Alton Lions Club

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11th Rockaholix (Roger Wilkinson, Alan Hill, Brian Callaghan, Chris Oliver) were at White Waltham airfield singing to Sir Nicholas Winton.

17th The Chorus was at Legoland, Windsor also appearing were Rockaholix.

23/26th BABS Convention at Harrogate.

Chorus results:

1st Grand Central Chorus....1348 points

2nd Thames Valley Chorus...1337 “

On this great occasion we sang ‘Birth Of The Blues’ with 51 on the risers C/D was Rhiannon Hall and ‘Lover’ with 50 on the risers C/D was Peter Kennedy. 20 choruses competed.

The quartet contest was won by Sound Crew with RBHC interests in Spotlight (with John Ward) who were in 4th position. In the Seniors Quartet competition Rockaholix (Roger Wilkinson, Alan Hill, Brian Callaghan, Chris Oliver) were in 2nd position.

TVC were in the Saturday all winners ‘Good As Gold’ show. The visiting American quartets were Metropolis and Saturday Evening Post.

30th The Daytimers were at Bearwood Lakes Golf Club.

It was reported that Graham Starkie has relinquished his chairmanship of the performance team and place on the exec after three years in the post. Irene, who has been taking minutes of the exec, show and music team meetings for thirteen years, has also decided to step down. The Club Chairman offered a huge vote of thanks to the pair of them for their dedication and professional support for so many years. They will still be active in producing the Tag Rag and Graham doing the recordings of rehearsals etc.

It was also reported that John Logan the Club Secretary is moving to Norfolk so a replacement is required.

10 Years Ago May 1998

23rd BABS Convention Harrogate

Chorus results:

1st Shannon Express 1385 points

2nd Cambridge Chord Company 1347 “

3rd Thames Valley Chorus 1329 “

We had 70 on the risers singing ‘Swanee’ C/D Tony Searle & ‘Birth Of The Blues’ C/D Steve Hall

The quartet contest was won by Chordial Exchange with RBHC placings: 8th Flying High (Pat Deeble, Graham Frampton, Ed Dolan, Jim Downing), 10th Bagatelle (Aidan Brand, Pete

Dawson, Andy Balchin, Ian Douglas). 16 quartets competed.

15 Years Ago May 1993

28/31st BABS Convention Harrogate
Chorus results: 1st Grand Central Chorus, 2nd Hallmark Of Harmony, 3rd Great Western Chorus 4th Pilgrimages, 5th Shannon Express, 6th Thames Valley Chorus. We had 80 on the risers singing ‘Mistakes’ & ‘Somebody Stole My Gal Medley’ C/D Derek Smith. The quartet contest was won by Island Engagement (Garden Isle). Irene Starkie and Sharon Towner were voted Honorary Members of RBHC for all their support work.

20 Years Ago May 1988

28th BABS Convention Harrogate
The chorus competition was won by the Great Western Chorus with TVC in 8th position. We had 39 on the risers singing ‘If I Had My Way’ & ‘Coney Island Medley’ C/D Derek Smith.

In the quartet contest won by High Time (with Steve Hall) our quartet Kennet Valley Chord Company (John Harvey, Pete Powell, Peter Wickham, Bruce Beer) were in 16th position. Other quartets in which we had an interest were Grand Slam (Graham Sutton) in 6th position and Downtown Strollers (Dick Knight) in 13th place. The visiting American quartet was Side Street Ramblers. Colin Thatcher was MC for the Voices In Harmony show at 5.30 on Sunday & Gerry Holland was MC for the Class Of 88 show at 8.30 on Sunday.

25 Years Ago May 1983

7th Full Chorus at Berks County Sports Club, Sonning for the Royal Fire Brigade Old Comrades Club.

21st Tilehurst Eisteddfod, Methodist Hall, Tilehurst
Chorus results:

1st Reading Barberettes, 2nd Thames valley Chorus, 3rd Chilton Harmony (Chesham Ladies)

Quartet results: 1st Mardi Grad (Dick Coles, Nick Carter, Dave Highway, Ian Douglas). 2nd Valleytones (Roger Wilkinson, Ron Beal, John Dudley, Haydn Adams). 3rd Yesterdays Dreamers (with Tony Searle & Gerry Holland).

Gilly Pozniak is helping the chorus with our choreography in ‘Row Row Row’. She gets a lot more attention than our previous choreographer Dick Coles.....she wears HOT PANTS.

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30 Years Ago May 1978

5th Full Chorus at St.Mary's Butts, Reading with the Barberettes for Christian Aid.

20th Full Chorus at Brookfield School, Tilehurst with the Barberettes.

Four No Trumps (Ken Hopper, Ron Beal, Pete Powell, Ron Collis) had three engagements, on the 13th at RAF West Drayton Officers Mess, on the 17th at Newbury and on the 27th at British Legion Pangbourne.

Our C/D Barry Nowell left to live and work at Lytham St.Annes, which meant the end of the Barrytones. Pete Powell took over once again as C/D and, as he was also C/D of the Barberettes, that meant the end of Four No Trumps. Graham Starkie took over as Club Chairman from Pete Powell. Colin Wood replaced Graham as Secretary.

I take this opportunity to wish the Chorus and any Club Quartets competing at convention the best of luck in their efforts. I will be watching the web site for the results, which hopefully will be in our favour.

HAYDN ADAMS



HEALTH WALKS IN YOUR AREA

I am a WHI Health Walk Leader in Wokingham Borough, for the Finchampstead area.

What is WHI (Walking for Health Initiative)?

WHI is for **everyone** with an interest in walking for health, particularly those who take little exercise or who live in areas of poor health. We offer information, support and encouragement to complete beginners, existing walkers and health and leisure professionals.

WHI is the 'Walking the way to Health Initiative' and it aims to get more people walking in their own communities, especially those who take little exercise or live in areas of poor health.

The concept of Health Walks was started by an Oxfordshire GP, Dr William Bird, for his patients at Sonning Common Health Centre in April 1995.

WHI is an initiative of the British Heart Foundation and Natural England. WHI has helped to create over 525 local health walk schemes and has trained over 31,500 volunteer walk leaders. Since 2000, it is estimated that we've encouraged over a million people to walk more.

Why walking for health?

Walking is set to play a bigger role in creating a healthier nation. Described by health experts as 'almost perfect exercise', walking requires no equipment or expense and is the ideal way for most people to become more active. Seven out of every ten people in this country are not physically active enough to benefit their health. There are groups near to you, find them on this web site <http://www.whi.org.uk/index.asp>

In Wokingham you can walk at 10am on any day somewhere in the Borough. On most days there is more than one walk to choose from. The walks have a Leader and a Backup Leader. All walks have been risk checked and classified in to Stroll, Easy, Medium and Hard. Most walks, apart from the Stroll, are about 2-3 miles, and take between 45 to 60 minutes. You walk at your pace, but the Leader tries to set a pace that encourages you to not stroll but to walk faster. It is a social occasion and we encourage people to walk and chat. If the pace is right then you should be puffed if you have been walking and talking after about 2 minutes. All Leaders are trained in first aid. All walkers are covered by insurance once they have registered. It costs nothing to join. On the Finchampstead walks we regularly get between 25 and 35 walkers. In the summer this has risen to 55 on many occasions.

You need to arrive at a walk start about 15 minutes before hand, book in and have a chat. After the walk you must book out, otherwise the Leaders have to backtrack to try and find you if your lost or injured. This rarely happens, people getting lost I mean. The Backup Leader is the last walker and should a person become ill or have a problem in walking they are the one to get the person home or to hospital.

As I write this I am due to go on a walk this morning, and its raining, can't say that I want to go, but . . . I know it's good for me. If you want to find out more then try the web site or chat to me at Chorus Rehearsal.

ANDY PEARCE

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15th July for 22nd distribution
12th Aug for 19th distribution
16th Sept for 23rd distribution
14th Oct for 21st distribution
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16th Dec for 23rd distribution

TAG RAG is published by the Reading Barbershop Harmony Club for the benefit of Members, Associates and anyone else who is fortunate or otherwise to come into contact with us. The opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily the official Club view.

SUPPORTERS

Many apologies to Syd Seward for adding an extra year to his age. Not only do you not look 86 you don't look anywhere near 85 either! I was so very sorry to hear of the loss of your daughter, Syd and Barbara, and just wanted to let you know that we are both thinking of you.

Convention is nearly upon us and I am looking forward to hearing and seeing TVC's performance of the two Convention songs on Tuesday evening. I wish everyone success on Saturday. Also best wishes to our two quartets - Figaro and Catch 22. See you all on Tuesday or at Cheltenham.

I enjoyed taking our 3 year old grandson, Fynn, to Fawley Court on Saturday even though it was chilly. We were very lucky to escape the rain as when we returned to Twyford it had obviously been raining hard. We had Fynn overnight and as he was going to bed he gave grandad a kiss and hug and said "thank you for the songs grandad" - he'll go far!

It was lovely to receive BB's missive and best wishes. Thank you, and I hope Judith and family are all well.

Luv 'n' hugs as always,

IRENE

Thanks to Haydn Adams, Bruce Beer, Richard Leatham, Lawrence McNulty, Andy Pearce, John Price, Rhiannon, Bob Ridley, and Irene for supplying copy.

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Objectives of the RBHC - To encourage the singing and enjoyment of Barbershop Harmony in both Chorus and Quartet form. It is a non profit making organisation and shall support such worthy charitable causes as the Executive Committee think fit. (paraphrase of Club rule number 2)

Contacts - The Club's Thames Valley Chorus rehearse on every Tuesday (with few exceptions) at the Piggott School Wargrave near Twyford Reading from 7.45pm until 10.30pm. All visitors are welcome. See website www.rbhc.org.uk for directions.

SECURITY NOTICE *The best place to park your car at the Piggott School is in the main car park at the side of the school; this area is under constant surveillance by four CCTV cameras. The camera over the front door only looks at the main entrance to record movements coming off the road.*

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THE REMAINING DAYS OF

MAY 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
18	19	20 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	21	22	23 BABS Convention Cheltenham	24 BABS Convention Cheltenham
25 BABS Convention Cheltenham	26	27 Rehearsal	28	29	30	31

June 2008 calendar is on page 2

A LOOK AHEAD TO

JULY 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
July 2008		1 Rehearsal	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Rehearsal	9	10	11	12
13	14	15 Rehearsal TAG RAG COPY DEADLINE	16	17	18	19 Daytimers Woodcote Crowethorne
20 Ferrari Fun Day Singout? TBC	21	22 Rehearsal TAG RAG DISTRIBUTION	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	July 2008	