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The Kentones

The Kentonian



Acafellas

THE BROMLEY BARBERSHOP HARMONY CLUB MAGAZINE

R.I.P. Barrie

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www.thekentones.co.uk

Bromley Barbershop Harmony Club

Formed in 1975, *Bromley Barbershop Harmony Club* is an umbrella organisation comprising a number of male groups specialising in four part unaccompanied close harmony singing. The Club has approximately 50 members, who form the main chorus, the *Kentones*. A smaller chorus, *Acafellas*, exists primarily to fulfil singing engagements at smaller venues. We also have a quartet, *Sound Alliance*.

In 2016, the *Kentones* were winners of the **Top Choir Kent** competition.

Whilst we take our singing seriously, we also believe making music should be a joyous pastime! We like to have fun and laughter along the way, and the Club is a great way to meet new people and make new friends. At the same time we have also raised thousands of pounds over the years for various charities.

Interested in joining us or hiring us for an event or function?

We are always glad to welcome new recruits. No previous choral experience is necessary, nor is it essential to be a music reader, as you will be given expert professional tuition backed up by learning aids. For full details of our activities and how to join, please visit www.thekentones.co.uk or just Google the *Kentones*.

From the Chairman

We have all been deeply moved by the sad news of Barrie Newman's passing on the 15th November this year. Barrie was a passionate barbershopper, committee member and later, Supporter of our Club. He has acted as Chairman, and it was in this capacity that he helped to set up the **Kentones Supporters' Club** to raise funds for us, and to help with refreshment at rehearsal nights etc. Without Barrie you would not be reading the *Kentonian*, as it was he who had the idea of a monthly newsletter, which evolved into the *Kentonian* of today. We owe Barrie a debt of gratitude and our thoughts and condolences are with Brenda, family and friends.

Barrie would be delighted with our recent progress under John's leadership as MD. Today's rehearsals are great fun, with John putting us through some interesting vocal coaching. It's great to see everyone buying in to his methods, and there is no doubt it is improving our singing to a much higher standard.

We have had the wonderful **Dad's Army** theme arranged in four part harmony by the great Liz Garnett, and words written by our very own David Tindall. Work on this is progressing well. Plans for Convention are looking very exciting and it's going to be great fun as well as hopefully, a great performance.

There are lots of sing-outs happening in December, which is great for the Club, as it brings us much needed funds, as well as raising our profile. Please make the effort to attend these whenever you can, they are always enjoyable, and are great way to help improve your live performance.

A **Learn to Sing** course is arranged for January, and for the first time we are using a leaflet distribution/magazine company, to insert 8000 flyers into the **Life in Orpington**, and **Life in Bromley magazines**. They will be hitting the doorsteps between December 20th and 31st. It is not too late for you to also help publicise the course by distributing flyers and badgering friends to come along and try barbershop singing. Hopefully, we will have a good number sign up for the course.

I'll leave it there, and just wish all **Kentones**, families and friends a Wonderful Xmas and a great New Year.

Kevin

Barrie Newman 1932–2023

(John) Barrie Newman joined the **Kentones** in 1991 as did Chris and another guy called Keith Fuller. They all turned up, unknown to each other, at a **Kentones** open evening. Impressed with the singing and the warm welcome they received, they all subsequently passed their auditions and Keith and Barrie joined the Bass section and Chris the Lead.

Such was Barrie's enthusiasm, it was he who suggested that a Supporters' Club should be formed to raise funds for the Chorus. With Keith's help and advice this came into being, the committee consisting of several wives. Barrie also sang with **Cordon Bleu**, the weekday chorus formed by John Vaughan which in the ten or so years of its existence raised over £12,000 for the Club. He served as Chairman for three years, stepping down in 1997, and was the recipient of the Stage Presence Award in 1998. He also served on the Committee for three years, stepping down in 2000.

Barrie was a loyal and enthusiastic Chorus member and became well-known for his jokes and funny stories, especially those told with the appropriate Cornish accent of Denzil and Jethro. Even if we shouted 'Yes Barrie' to his enquiry 'Have I told you this one,?' he still continued, and even though we had heard them many times before they always caused a laugh.

Chris and I formed a great friendship with Barrie and wife Brenda, enjoying their generous hospitality, holidays and outings and attending several International Conventions. It was sad when his increased loss of hearing made singing so difficult that he made the decision to stand down.

However, he often turned up on Chorus nights to help make the tea. His health deteriorated and he spent over a year in and out of hospital or bed bound at home, nursed devotedly by Brenda. He passed away in the PRUH on 15 November. His funeral will be on Wednesday 20th December at the Bluebell Cemetery at 11am.

It's sad that later members of the **Kentones** didn't know Barrie. He was a real character, a faithful and committed member of the **Kentones**, generous and a good friend.

Dear Barrie, I hope you are making them laugh wherever you are but perhaps leave out the one about the lady with the silky dress!

Avril Sydee



A Final Performance For A Legend

Brenda Newman asked if it would be possible for a few **Acafellas** to pop round to her and Barrie's house for Prosecco and cake to help celebrate his 91st birthday, and a date was agreed for an **Acafellas** rehearsal day, Tuesday 10th October.



Fast forward to the day and there was a huge attendance at the morning rehearsal, and when I asked who intended to go along to sing *Happy Birthday* to Barrie, there was a unanimous raising of hands from those lucky enough to have known him. This was a little concerning, as I wondered how we were going to find parking for all those cars, let alone get 20 or more men into the house.

Following rehearsal, we drove the short distance to Barrie's house, where we were welcomed with open arms. How we all fitted in I do not know: it seemed as though the gods had turned downstairs into a TARDIS for the hour or so we were there. There were **Acafellas** everywhere - in the living room, in the kitchen and even on the stairs.

After singing *Happy Birthday* to Barrie, we sang a few more songs before enjoying Prosecco and cake. Barrie was most appreciative and even joined in where he could, despite his obvious tiredness. It was a magical moment, of which I will have fond memories. For those of you who did not have the pleasure of knowing Barrie, you have certainly missed out. He is a legend.

Alan Lucking

MD'S Corner

A little update on my quartet singing:

It only took 14 years ... But I finally got a quartet medal with Rae, Mary and Simon at this year's UK mixed finals. After placing 3rd at the prelim (I was rather unwell at the time, you may remember), we were thrilled to get through the semi finals and then place second in the final, whoop! whoop!

Rae also made the ladies' quartet finals and placed 6th. Mary went one better in getting second and first (in both choruses) in the ladies' chorus competition!



It's true to say we all slept well that night, and had the bonus on the Sunday of singing in the show where we could display our silver medals. It was an amazing weekend, with so much fun with dear friends.

Also, I had a chance to sing with my senior quartet, **The Setting Sons**, with you at the **Kentones'** Disabled Christian Fellowship sing-out, and I hope you didn't mind us sharing your stage. It mixed things up a little and we very much enjoyed the occasion.

The **Kentones** have a really fun journey ahead, what with our singing improvements and an ever growing number of new members. Please keep focused, and encourage our new members, especially during the coming **Learn to Sing** course. We can all recall how daunting it can be to come along and sing in front of strangers. Your efforts will be worth it. As we grow as a chorus (in size and performance), our score will improve at Convention.

We all know "Sir" Jack, but I had not had the pleasure of watching the fantastic **Kentones'** quartet, **Select Company**, till it was posted recently.

I don't know Dave (the tenor) but remember with such fondness John (bass) and Charley (baritone), and it was such a delightful surprise to see them all on stage. Jack is still leading the way and we can all see why.

I just wanted to acknowledge this quartet's achievements and to publicly say thank you to Jack for showing how a talented, dedicated singer can give so much back to so many over the years.

You are a **Kentones** legend my friend 🙌🙌

John Williams

PCSA Kent

It was a great pleasure to be invited by David Tindall who proposed us as your charity, to talk to the **Kentones** about the work of The Prostate Cancer Support Association Kent (**PCSA Kent**), and about prostate cancer generally.

Despite prostate cancer being the most common cancer in men, many are unaware of its signs and symptoms or the factors that might increase their risk of developing the disease. This, therefore, was a golden opportunity to meet with a large group of men of a certain age, and raise awareness of prostate cancer.

Often at these events there's generally plenty of tea and biscuits on offer but never a chorus of brilliant singing. Many thanks, gentlemen for a thoroughly enjoyable evening! I only wish I'd had a teacher like John when I was at school. I might have learnt to sing!

Back to the troublesome prostate. There are several conditions that may affect the prostate but most men will develop an enlarged prostate as they grow older. In many cases this affects the ability to pass urine normally.

This is routinely dealt with through medication or a simple operation.

However, around one in eight men will develop prostate cancer; this rises to one in four for Black and African-Caribbean men. Whilst the majority

of men diagnosed with prostate cancer are over 70, younger men too can be affected. Prostate cancer cells usually grow very slowly and may never cause any harm. Most men, in fact, will die with prostate cancer rather than from it.

Nevertheless, in the UK over 52000 new cases are diagnosed each year and more than 12000 men die from the disease. Many of these deaths, however, could be prevented should the disease be diagnosed earlier.

Men who experience symptoms or are over the age of 50 or are in any of the high-risk groups, should talk to their doctor.

Many symptoms are common to other far less serious conditions, but they should never be ignored. The doctor may order a simple PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) blood test. An elevated PSA, or an abnormal rise in PSA over a period of time, may suggest further tests are necessary. (PSA is often elevated in the presence of prostate cancer but not uniquely so as it may also point to other prostate disorders.) Tests are likely to provide welcome reassurance that cancer can be ruled out.

However, should prostate cancer be identified, and treatment recommended, its early diagnosis offers the best prospect of a successful outcome. Nevertheless, a prostate cancer diagnosis will undoubtedly be a distressing experience, not only for the man concerned but for those closest to him.

PCSA Kent is a patient led organisation set up around seventeen years ago with the aim of supporting anyone in Kent whose life has been affected by prostate cancer. We offer practical and emotional support through regular meetings and telephone / email contact. Whilst we cannot offer medical advice, men and their partners who reach out to us often find talking to others affected by the disease extremely helpful and reassuring.

The Association also raises much needed funds to help Kent hospitals purchase additional equipment for use in diagnosing and treating prostate cancer, equipment hospitals might otherwise be unable to afford. Every penny raised through our many fundraising efforts, goes directly to helping Kent hospitals.

We are extremely grateful to the **Kentones** for adopting **PCSA Kent** as their chosen charity for this year and can confidently reassure members that the money they raise really will help save lives.

Brian Murphy

Further information about prostate cancer can be found via the links on the Association's website: <https://www.pcsakent.org>

Brian with David Tindall



Sing-Out at The Glades On behalf Of PCSA

Our first Christmas sing-out of the year at The Glades was very successful. John Williams was pleased: "Blooming well done at the Glades today lads.", he said. "You sang so very well, and I received such great comments from passers-by and the gents collecting for the **PCSA Kent** charity. You should be very proud Kentones."



As you can see from his email to Martin Saunders below, Brian Murphy was also pleased:

Yesterday was a lovely experience for us - and a very successful one!

I understand from Terry that we raised £418:27p, which is a brilliant result! More importantly, we managed to distribute a huge number of leaflets and had some helpful conversations with folk. Several men we spoke to were concerned about prostate cancer and needed just a gentle shove to talk to their GP.

As always, however, it was left to wives to take a leaflet! Hopefully, they will read them (they generally do), and encourage their other half to begin a conversation with their GP.

Many thanks again, David, Martin and all members for supporting PCSA Kent in this way. Combining your interest in men's health with your wonderful singing talent was a brilliant idea! Please do keep in touch. It is great to know you'd be willing to help us with future events.

*On behalf of our Association, may I wish you and your colleagues a very happy Christmas and New Year,
Brian*

Gamesmaker Extraordinaire

At the 2012 London Olympics, I was a volunteer Gamesmaker. I was appointed as a Personal Assistant to an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member. We had to undertake 3 days of training including a driving test. Although I had been driving for over 30 years, I was a bit nervous beforehand but sailed through. I needn't have worried; a woman after me hit a bollard and still passed!

I was then allocated to an American IOC member. He was in a wheelchair and unable to speak due to a stroke. He was determined to see the Olympics through, and was accompanied by his wife, two physios and a nurse. With all the equipment he needed they had to borrow a private jet, as you do. Because of needing to get into London to collect my vehicle from Park Lane, be available until late at night and then return the car, I was pulling 12 hour shifts most days, but I enjoyed every bit of it. Most days they liked to go to USA House near the Albert Hall for lunch; this suited me as I got quality lunches free of charge.

After a few days they asked me to pick up a friend of theirs from Heathrow and bring her in to London. We had been told to refuse such requests, but it would have been awkward and as I had nothing else to do that morning, I went to the airport. On the journey back I found that this lady was a high end Realtor from New York: she found it novel to be going by car as previously she had used a helicopter! She was also the owner of the private jet! We were told that we would not get tickets to any venues, but should drop off our clients and wait off-site until called for pick-up. Talking to other Gamesmakers, I found that I could get my accreditation upgraded, making it easier, with a bit of confidence, to blag one's way past security into any venue. So I would drop off clients, asking them to call me with 30 minutes notice for pick-up, and then head into the venues.

Usually this meant walking in as if you worked there, and then through the main army checkpoint, for which my accreditation was sufficient, and then finding a suitable spot from which to watch to watch.

The first time I tried this was at the Beach Volleyball at Horse Guards Parade. Unfortunately (or maybe not) I took a wrong turn and found myself in the changing area for the Brazil Women's team. Quickly exiting stage left, I took another wrong turn and found myself courtside. Another time I blagged my way into Lord's cricket ground for the Archery, where a volunteer gave me tickets to sit in the stands. I found Archery boring, so I went for a wander and found the famous Long Room, which I think is for members only. The room was not in use but unlocked, so I wandered through, until a Lord's steward told me to clear off. One evening I finished early, so I went to the Olympic Stadium and watched the Jamaican team win Relay Gold. That evening I managed to get into the VIP seating area but made the mistake of taking a photo and was again told to leave.

After the first two weeks, the Americans went home. I had to arrange for three vehicles to get them and all their equipment to Farnborough airfield to board their jet. I was told that I could not go airside, and that the airfield staff would take my clients to the plane. The jet owner was having none of this. She spoke to the airport manager and off I went to the plane, as she wanted me to see inside...how the other half lives.



Gameskeeper Paul Williamson

With a week still to go, I was allocated to the Eritrean IOC member. This was a real culture shock but good fun. As they only had seven athletes, there were fewer visits to Olympic Venues. I was asked to take them to **Primark** one day, and another day to **Poundland** in Stratford. With more spare time, I again went to the USA House for meals, as I still had a valid pass.

On three evenings they had me take them for meals and insisted I join them; two of these were in private houses where the local Eritrean community put on a real spread, and the third was in a community centre in North London. On this occasion I dropped them off and parked the vehicle. When I walked into the room for the meal I was met with a crescendo of noise as they all ululated, thinking I was someone special. My clients were deep in conversation so I went and sat with their team - fortunately one of their coaches could translate for me. After a while another Eritrean, suited and booted, came and sat next to me and we started talking. He had been to Manchester University and we got on really well. I didn't know who he was, so eventually asked him. "I am the Ambassador for Eritrea," he replied. One day I was driving down the Mall in the special lane. There were no other cars and I needed to contact the team back at base so used my hand held phone. As I reached the Palace, two unmarked cars raced over and hemmed me in - Special Branch. They were concerned that the phone could be a bomb trigger! Fortunately they accepted my explanation and let me carry on. There were many more incidents during those fantastic weeks that I will never forget. I went home to relax, but after a few days I got the call - "Can you come back for the Paralympics?"

Paul Williamson

Family Quizmas Time from Nick Aziz

1. Your turkey may be in the oven, but with which country would you most associate cooking meat in an underground pit, a method known as 'Hangi'?
2. Often shown at Christmas, the heroine of *Dirty Dancing* (Frances Houseman) has what nickname?
3. If you sometimes just can't sing "that" note correctly, you might be embracing the Japanese concept of 'wabi-sabi'. But what is it?
4. As the cold wind blows, spare a thought for the inhabitants of the Aran Islands. But where would they wear pampooties?
5. Who played Jesus in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)? Younger readers may also know him as a latter-day rival of Spiderman!
6. Not where Santa shops, (he has elves, of course), but which toy company was founded in Rhode Island in 1923 by Henry and Helal Hassenfeld?
7. A soft drink usually consumed at Christmas, *Julmust* is enjoyed in which Scandinavian country?
8. Who deposed Biffo the Bear from the **Beano's** front cover in an autumn edition in 1974? (Clue: it wasn't the Editor of the *Kentonian*)
9. Hypostyles. No, not the only fashion one can fit into after over-indulging in Christmas pudding. Actually an architectural term, but from which ancient civilisation?
10. Not a Partridge or a Pear tree in sight, but of the 12 men to walk on the moon, 6 were born in which same year.

Answers are on Page 9 All were correct at some point in time!

'Saint Nick'

Clothing Donations Wanted



Our Super Tenor, Patric (“Don’t tell him Pike”) DaSilva will soon be driving a van to Ukraine to deliver clothing (and medical supplies) to the people of this war-torn country. He will be leaving at the end of January and has asked **Kentones** and friends to donate any unwanted clothing.

These can be brought to rehearsal night.

He has also set up a **Just Giving** page for anyone wishing to donate funds to help cover the costs of travelling to the Ukraine and back home. Details of the site are:

https://www.paypal.com/donate?campaign_id=BLZEV3X6M5TTQ

Patric has a family connection to Ukraine. He says, “My wife Julia is from Ukraine and moved to Germany when she was a child. Her grandmother still lives in Ukraine, in Ternopil, and this is where I will be travelling to in January”

“We can’t do much to stop the Russian atrocities but we can help to add some happiness to the lives of the Ukrainian people, and hopefully reduce their suffering. It’s time to give back, and to support those in need. With your help I can reach my goal of helping the Ukrainian people”.

Patric also has a Ukrainian refugee and her son living in his house. He says, “ She was desperate. She had lost her job and being a single mum

she has had to start again.”

Male, female and children’s clothing is required. Please help if you can. Every donation makes a difference.

Answers To Christmas Quiz

1. New Zealand
2. Baby
3. The beauty of imperfection, and impermanence
4. On their feet. (leather shoes)
5. Willem Dafoe
6. Hasbro
7. Sweden
8. Dennis the Menace
9. Egyptian (Pillars holding up the roof)
10. 1930

Another great year for the Kentones with enjoyable club nights, satisfying singouts and exciting prospects for 2024. Our best wishes for the New Year, and a happy and peaceful Christmas to you all.

David & Norma Southgate.

To all you 'Merry Gentlemen', your partners and families,
HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Have a fantastic time, and here's to a happy, healthy and tuneful 2024.
Best wishes Tom, Debbie and family

Ho! Ho! Ho! It's Christmas.

Have a great time.

The Simpsons.



Wishing all members, a Happy Christmas and New Year.

John and Jenny Sollitt

Linda & Brian wish one and all a very merry Christmas and a happy

&

healthy New Year.



A Happy Xmas and New Year to all our Kentones friends and family, from your Chairman and First Lady Kev and Bernie

Ho! Ho! Ho! - Here we go! Yet another year of seasons greetings to all, and a happy and healthy New Year.

Bob & Vicky Gilbert



Greetings to all at the Kentones and their families; sending you kind wishes for good health and happiness in 2023 from Brian & amp; Hazel Showell

Jack & Pat Willoughby wish all club members, their families and supporters the merriest of Christmases and a very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year,

Greetings at Christmas

May you have friends at your fire, blessings in your home and joy in your heart.

Avril and Chris Sydee



Julio and Isabel wish all the members of the Kentones and their families and all the helpers a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2024. Feliz Navidad y próspero año nuevo.

Happy Christmas, and good wishes to you all for New Year.

Chris & Martin Saunders

Both Joyce and I wish all chorus members, wives and supporters a joyful Christmas and a peacefull 2024.

John Weeks



Adrian & Liz Emes wish all Kentones and our Supporters a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Wishing the Kentones a very merry Christmas, and a healthy and happy New Year, with much success at next year's Convention, With our very best wishes, Paul & Gillian Sheehan

A very happy Christmas and a Kentones New Year to all. John and Sheila Everson

Best wishes for Christmas and 2024 to all ranks of the Bromley Home Guard - and camp followers.

David Tindall and Diane Beckett.

Wishing you all a merry Xmas and a happy and harmonious New Year.

Joe and Carol Seet



Seasons greetings to all at the Kentones
John and Carol Young

Colin and Sue Couves send Christmas greetings and best wishes to all Kentones, supporters and their families.

Festive greetings to one and all. Have a great Xmas and a happy & healthy 2024.



Best wishes

Martin & Tracy

Gill & Carlo wish all members, families and supporters a very merry Xmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Denis and Pat wish Kentones and families the very best in the New Year.



Nick and Jane Baxter wish a Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year to all our fellow Kentones and their families, and all our supporters

Wishing all our fellow Kentones a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year. What a good year it's been...long may it continue. 🌲🎁🧊

Regards to all.

Dave and Elaine Elliott

Wishing you all a cracking Xmas and Health, Happiness & Harmony in the New Year.

Derek and Carol

Christmas greetings chaps

Wishing you and your families a peaceful and happy time over the festive season.

Much love

John, Rae and David Williams

Seasonal greetings to all fellow Kentones and their families. Alan, Elsa, and Montgomery Hector the first



Best wishes to all Kentones and Acafellas, members and supporters for Christmas and the New Year from Ann and John Vaughan

Colin and Margaret Barnes would like to wish all Club members and their families a very Happy Christmas and a harmonious New Year.

Don and Joan Bodker would like to wish all Kentones, supporters and families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

A very Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year to all members of the Kentones, their families and friends. Good wishes to all. John Rayfield



Wishing all Kentones and supporters, old, new and those we've yet to meet a great Christmas and a singout-filled New Year!
Tim 'n' Jude

Wishing all Kentones and Supporters a very Happy Noel and a New Year filled with music and song!
Geoff and Stella Mountney

Frank & Pam Taylor have pleasure in wishing all Club members a very merry Christmas and successful 2024. Particularly with the Convention in mind



30 Years of De Poisson

When Martin the Ed asked for an article, he may not have visualised what 30 years meant in my Scribing mode. For all you newer, wiser song-bashers, it will be hard for you to relate to all these past names and songs, but I hope it gives you an idea of the Club's history from some old demented bod.

30 years as a barbershopper, you can't get that in Tesco's, even with Clubcard points. I first came across barbershop on a bank holiday weekend in Bournemouth. Looking for something to do on Saturday night, my wife Linda and I went into the International Centre, and strangely enough heard singing. I thought: I want some of that. We booked for the Saturday night show which was compered by Ken Bruce, and was very different to the later set-up. It was a great show with good singing and a good comedy routine by **Southern Union**.

Many moons ago, I owned and ran a fish and chip shop and was known as the singing chippy, for sweetly warbling while battering the cod and frying the chips. Anyway, Del James, a customer and a **Kentone**, kept suggesting I come along to a **Kentones** Thursday night rehearsal. Eventually I made it along. Little did I know what I had let myself in for... It just so happened that Steve Hall had come along to coach this merry band. Steve was not one to miss a new face and I didn't buckle under his "attention" all night long. Just a brief morsel about Steve Hall, sadly no longer with us: he was an inspiring coach, and on one of his coaching sessions for Convention he picked out a bari singing a wrong note, nuff said. He also had a minimal directing technique, a feature of some choruses today. Like John Williams is sharing now, Steve would bring ideas from his singing coach.

My audition was nervy, as most are. My only other singing audition had been as a 7 or 8 year old for the local church choir in Nottinghamshire. I doubt if anyone here would know St Modwen's in Sutton in Ashfield. That auditon involved me standing behind the choirmaster who was playing the piano, and singing the words on the music of *All in the April Evening*. For my **Kentones** audition, which I had to have two goes at, I sang *My Wild Irish Rose*, with Charley Gates singing behind me to give me a start. Here you go again, HE'S BEHIND YOU! As they were dead short at the time, I was welcomed as long as I sang baritone.

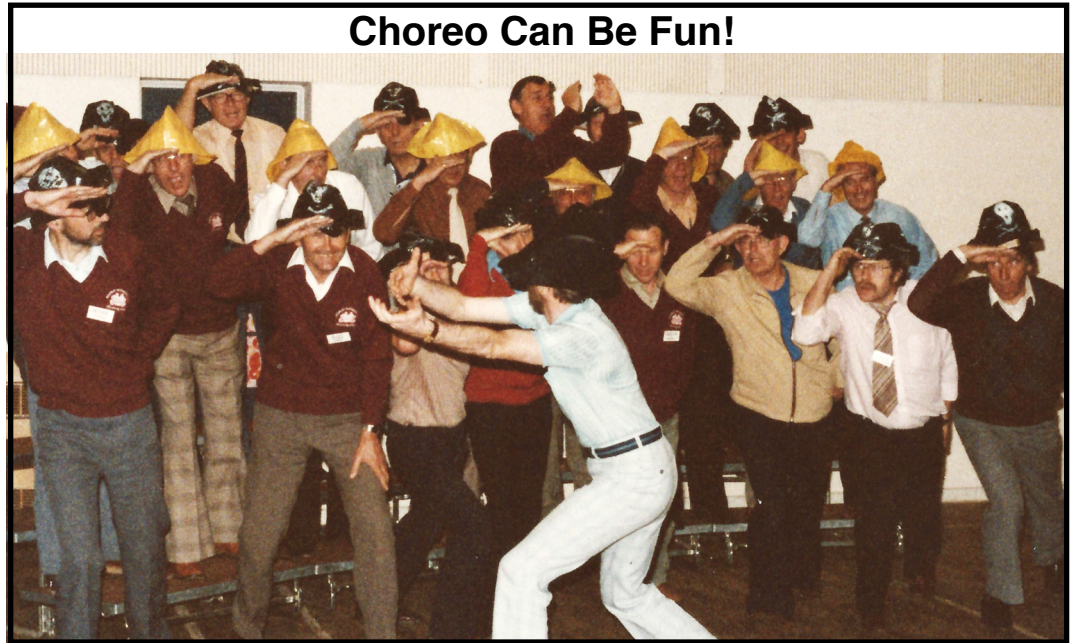
A singing challenge for me when I was a newbie involved standing directly in front of Ron Mesure. With his bass voice you didn't need a bass section, and needless to say progress took a while. However, I was very fortunate to stand between Charley Gates and Del James, and they both gave me the *bari shoulder* when I was singing under pitch, disconcerting but valuable. I think I need that still after all these years. I also have to give a special mention to Colin Couves for his encouragement and invaluable help.

Convention practice was on the way when I joined, and as I was not Convention material at this point, I became involved by punishing my hands by clapping furiously with the words: *Stewards close the doors please. FROM Bromley.....*

My first Convention was in Harrogate in 1995. In those days going to Convention was a family affair, with everyone travelling by coach and all staying in the same hotel. Also, the afterglows had a different vibe, as things moved on. It became more like a reprise for the winning choruses: again things move on. This Convention was memorable for many different reasons: 1. The chorus galloping away with *Railroad Rag*, leaving our MD, John Mesure in Harrogate and us in Chicago; and 2. **Vocal Majority**, the top barbershop chorus in the world at that time, topping the bill. What an introduction to Convention! They say that everything is big in Texas and boy, the size of some of them had to be seen to be believed. They had to have two minders to help them off the stage! All this aside, they are such hugely talented guys, and their performance of *Nightingale* was spellbinding. They also sang religious and other styles of songs, which I wish we could do more of, like 4 part harmony not in the barbershop style.

Barbershop has always had choreo but at that time, singing was the prime feature, unlike today where you have West End style sets. Ideas move on and some modern choruses really are mind-blowing. Ron Mesure, our founder, was a man of many parts, including crafting props for performances. Not long after I joined, he said to me: "I've got just the job for you". It was as THE DIVER in *Asleep in the Deep*. It was fun and it gave me a challenge to create outrageous props. At

certain points in the song I had to pretend to swim in front of the chorus whilst in frogman's gear complete with flippers. The highlight for me one night at practice, was when I appeared doing a backstroke. Normally I did a pathetic crawl or bosom-stroke, and when John Measure caught sight of me he collapsed in a fit of laughter. The guys never knew what to expect next. Happy days! The choreo for *Asleep in the Deep* was something else - Ron had made props galore, little wooden fish plus great ideas for the outfits. At one performance my wife Linda said that she felt quite seasick, watching us, because of the rolling sea movement. We've had some wonderful choreo over the



years, but one thing we've always struggled with is maintaining quality singing while prancing about. This was noticeable in **Cottontown's** set this year at Convention, unusual for them.

Back at work, a key member of my staff moved on, meaning I had to work on a Thursday night, and I had to take a sabbatical from the Club. But then another musical path rode into view. A lady customer suggested I come and sing with the **Orpington Chorale** on a Wednesday evening. Well, we didn't open the shop on a Wednesday, so I gave it a go. Another audition? Not really. The Chorale's secretary told the conductor I could sing in tune, and that was it. I was a 1st bass, similar to a bari but with a few low notes thrown in for fun. They sang all this Requiem stuff, in Latin or Greek, different composers using the same words or similar to different toons. Fortunately I had an inkling of what *pianissimooohhh* and *fortissimoow* meant, but not Poco Rit or Recitative etc. I have come to realise that you pick up useful bits from both classical and barbershop.

During my sabbatical, the Club was very good to me. Colin or someone would bring in the music and teach tracks to new songs. For my part I had become *Brian The Riser Man*. I had a van which meant I could transport the risers to sing-outs. During my time away I lent my van for this purpose and John Rayfield or Barrie Newman helped out. Of course for Convention practice I did it myself, as it kept me in touch with the Chorus and singing barbershop.

Before I move on, a seismic event took place whilst still on my barbershop sabbatical: A dynamic lady from the **Demelza** charity had the brilliant idea to put on a 3 chorus concert, **Kentones, Orpington Chorale and Velvet Harmony**. Music can be so healing, calming and uniting? THINK AGAIN! I was singing with the **Chorale**, and found myself in the Henry Kissinger, mediator role between us and them. Oh the love and harmony, it was such a joyful task (HO, HO). I never really achieved harmony, but on the bright side, the concert was a great success and provided much needed funds for the charity. Should anyone wish to see the concert I have it on a memory stick somewhere.

Enough of all this chorus stuff. What about quartets I hear you say.

Select Company were the first actual LIVE barbershop quartet I heard in the **Kentones**. The mighty Sir Jack sang lead, Charley Gates bari, John Measure bass and Dave James tenor. What an accomplished quartet they were, and Jack's got a **GOLD** medal to prove it. Charley did the chat and told jokes, very funny they were too. I remember a comedy song where Jack had extending arms, which seemed to be coming out forever. I believe he has them under lock and key somewhere. Our second quartet was **Southern Brand**, with Colin Couves bari, Don Bodker bass, Ian Quinn lead and (I think) Ken

Heyday as tenor, also Alan Lamprell. I must also mention our present quartet **Sound Alliance**, Alan, Denis, Roy, not forgetting Jack.

Social activities have always been an important side of the Club: Ken Heyday had a farm, and in my early days he held a barn dance in a proper barn with hay bales. It was all good fun, but fixed in the memory is THE HOME-MADE



SCRUMPY, nuff said.

When Barrie Newman became chairman, a Supporters' club was formed, and he and his wife Brenda played a pivotal role in setting it up. I don't think we were prepared for what hit us. Peggie and Mollie Bensaid were twins who had trodden the boards as professional dancers with **ENSA**, and did comedy dancing routines. They were past the bloom of youth, but what energy. Peggie was made chairman and they were so well connected, don't you know, that they soon had the Mayor of Bromley involved.

Apart from the support and money they raised for the Club, I have an abiding memory of their first involvement at Convention. Due to their stage background they decided we needed to wear make-up for the stage, and with a team of wives and partners they set to work with all the tools of make-up. It had been a long time since I had been painted and blushed. I felt a right *?%*!, but on seeing a picture of me, I have to say it made a normally pasty-faced me look rather bronzed and ooooohhh. Geoff Mountney was also fantastic for his part in the **Kentones** social side, and among other things, he introduced the highly successful quiz night.

Meanwhile, I was becoming a bit of a dinosaur in my business. Tastes were changing. Youngsters who had been an enjoyable part of my staff over the years were now finding it easier to get jobs in supermarkets, and they didn't have to worry about *Eau De Parfum de Poisson et Pomme Frites*. So I hung up my potato peeler and batter whisk and went back to sing with the **Kentones**. It wasn't too long before the then chairman, Bob Gilmour, was on the hunt for a new Club secretary, and his tentacles reached out to draw in a fellow baritone: me. Thus began my ten year journey of minute taking. Guiding some chairmen and pacifying others, (all great fun, yeah) but on the whole I enjoyed this part of my **Kentones** journey.

Music Directors over my 30 years, mmm, there have been one or two, each with their own ideas:

John Measure was keen on singing to the end of phrases, matching vowels, diphthongs, consonants. (A lot of the stuff John

Williams is getting us to do today!)

Andrew Sentinella comes to mind, he was a virgin MD, classically trained but with a wife experienced in barbershop. He came in with a very different song for Convention, I can't recall the actual title, someone will remind me, something like *The Bandstand in Central Park*. In those days there was an upright piano in the hall, which he used to help us with chords etc. He also persuaded the committee to buy a "professional" minidisc recorder, pretty cool at that time. And he produced his own teach tracks which was innovative at the time.

Mike Corr had about the longest stretch steering us along as MD. He was another who stepped up from the chorus. A small thing: when I first joined it was reassuring to hear some bod talking proper like me, e.g. sitting on the (*gr*)*ass* instead of (*gr*)*arse*. Mike had an interesting tenure because he was chief arm waggler when Bob Gilbert suggested we go to the International Barbershop gathering at Den Bosch in Holland, so that his mother could hear us warbling. A great experience, we went several times, and some of us have the orange polo shirts to prove it. When Big JW goes on about us going on a coach to Convention, Den Bosch was in a different league. It was fantastic singing at the motorway services on the way to Convention, but to freak out passengers on the cross Channel ferries was something else, and the quizzes on the coach were great. Who could forget the wonderful welcome from the local chorus and their warm hospitality. Booze, singing, food, more booze, singing, canals, Bosch Bollen etc. Get the impression we might have enjoyed it?

In Mike's time, **Learn to Sing** courses were introduced. Success was variable. One year about nine or ten joined, with a core of them still hanging in there, and playing a significant part in the Club. Mike joined Gareth Malone's NHS choir and eventually had to leave us.

Peter Kennedy came in sometime after. He was a great one for throwing himself on the floor. It would be no eggsagerationnnnnn to say his style was unlike anything we had encountered! He brought in some good coaches, Dale Kynaston, J Braham from the **Cheshire Chord** ladies' chorus. Peter was boosted when this American guy walked in one night to have a sing.

Enter stage left: Ryan Jensen, one genuine American barbershopper. He joined us and ended up being the man out front when Peter left to join **Meantime**. If we thought PK was "flamboyant", Ryan, a man of let's say some substance, shook the earth by leaping up and down whenever we smashed a chord. Sadly, his job took him back to America and we needed to look for another MD.

Rita came next, and she was very definitely well classically trained. Unfortunately, she had to call it a day to help care for her mother living in Hungary.

That brings us up to the present with Big John W (although he's a bit less than he was in his first singing spell with us!). So it's now a case of WATCH THIS SPACE to see where he takes the **Kentones**, and hopefully in 30 or so years time some of our newer members will be recalling good times and medals galore.

Last but not least is to mention the efforts of Frank Taylor and Colin Couves, not only supportive of whoever came in as Chief Arm Waggler but many times they have stepped up and kept the Club going when we have been without an MD. It's time for me to wrap up now.

"Thank Heavens, he's finished", Martin the Ed will be shouting, and I bet Dave, the Chat and Sub Ed, will be going cross-eyed and weeping after all this.



De Poisson.....Thirty Years On and Blooming Older

Editor's note: Dear reader, you may sleep safely in the knowledge there is no truth in the rumour that De Poisson's next scribe is about the saga of sending the old risers to Spain.

Sub Ed's note: Any more of this, and I'll need counselling...



The Kentones

Club Night:

Thursday 7.30pm at St Paul's Church Hall, Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 8JE

Life President — Frank Taylor

Chairman — Kevin Phillips



Secretary — Colin Barnes

Music Director — John Williams



Acafellas

Meetings:

Alternate Tuesdays, 10am to 12 noon at Chelsfield Methodist Church BR6 6HD

Chorus Director — Alan Lucking



Interested in joining us? Need entertainment for an event or function?

Please visit www.thekentones.co.uk

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