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The Kentones

The Kentonian



Acafellas

THE BROMLEY BARBERSHOP HARMONY CLUB MAGAZINE



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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

It is always sad to start with news of a bereavement, but we have recently heard of the passing of Pam Shoebridge. For our newer members, Pam was one of the early members of the **Kentones Supporters' Club** and she worked tirelessly helping the Club. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

I have been impressed by how much our new members from the recent **Learn To Sing** course have immersed themselves into the Club. Most will be singing at Convention, which I believe can only help in their development as barbershoppers. My only advice is to enjoy the experience as much as possible.

It doesn't seem possible that a year has passed since we were practising our two Convention songs, **Firefly** and **Rainbow**. But here we are 12 months later, with two new songs, **If I Give My Heart To You** and **Just In Time**, and a new MD, John Williams. The Chorus has worked really hard in preparing for Convention, and I feel we are beginning to take on board John's advice and teaching, but we still have some way to go to ensure we are singing **consistently**. We need to be able to produce our best performance **every** time we sing, and not after our second or third attempt. At Convention we are marked on that first performance, so we have to be able to produce a quality performance every time we sing!

In **MD's Corner**, John has produced a list of standards to help us. Please read, understand and use them. They will improve you as a barbershop singer and us as a chorus. Above all, you **must** practise at home. Thursday night is not the time to learn the words, notes or rhythm of a song.

Convention is a great event and a fantastic opportunity for everyone to sing with, and compete against, fellow barbershoppers. We have come a long way since the disappointment and disillusionment of last year's result, and I feel that the Chorus and the Club are on an upward trajectory. I can only reiterate what John has said in his piece... please do not waste the hard work you have put in so far. Between now and Convention, **practise, practise, practise**. If you do, we'll not just get a better placing, you will enjoy Convention so much more.

Kevin

Volunteers Wanted

Singing on a Thursday rehearsal night is thirsty work! We look forward to our tea break, when we can have a cup of tea or coffee, rest our legs and catch up with our fellow **Kentones**.



Volunteers coming in to make the refreshments really do help us, giving us more time to concentrate on singing and learning our songs.



Some of our tea-rota stalwarts have had to hang up their tea towels, meaning there are fewer for us to call on. We would like to attract some more volunteers, as many new

faces as possible.

Sue Couves does a sterling job of running the rota, and having more names in her address book will mean each person is called upon less often. If you would like to join this merry Band of Brewers please contact Sue. It is fun, and also gives you the opportunity to hear the chorus as well as helping the Club.

MD'S Corner

Anyone getting excited yet? Well I am, and before you know it we will be at Convention in Bournemouth. Now is the time to double down on your notes, words, timing and performance so we can achieve our best. We have had two Sunday rehearsals, and the improvements are clear and defined. We still have two to go, and if we make the same level of improvements we will have a great time at Convention.

To help us, I have produced a benchmark of common standards, to be known as **The Kentone Standards**, which we should all be striving to achieve. Many of these we have covered since I became MD, and some we will soon be working on. You will find them over the page. Use them as a reminder of what/how to practise, and what to think about before even putting a foot on stage.

You have all worked extremely hard over the past 6 months to improve your singing. Please don't let that count for nothing...as I mentioned earlier you still need to put in that final effort between now and Convention.

Remember:

The only place where success comes *before* work is in the dictionary

John Williams

THE KENTONE STANDARDS

1. *Keep an open mind and practise, practise, practise.*

The more hard work you put in...the more you and your audience will enjoy the results.

2. *Thursday night is a performance night, not a rehearsal night.*

Rehearsal is something you do at home.

3. *Body preparation and tuning is our first stage on a Thursday.*

Warm up is done before we meet, gentle humming and gentle singing of your favourite songs.

4. *Stance relaxed, hang ten, windows, focused with good alignment and jaw position.*

5. *Riser discipline.*

6. *Sing within your own quality bubble.*

Remember, seven is our new ten.

7. *Sing with confidence.*

Confidence breeds competence.

8. *Woofers, tweeter or mixed nut? Know your place in resonance.*

Woofers add AH vowel shape to words, Tweeters add an O vowel shape.

9. *Trust.*

Trust yourself and your fellow **Kentones**.

10. *Stay professional.*

Don't be distracted by mistakes. Often your reaction is worse than the issue that's already gone.

11. *Sing to the end of each line, always turn diphthongs as late as possible and sing the singable consonants.*

12. *Get the air out of your lungs before a new breath.*

This will prevent short breathing and massively improve quality and length of note available.

13. *Choose the middle breath start, almost an out breath as you sing.*

Hard start and super breathy starts are for effect as and when required only.

14. *Hold at the end of each song until directed to acknowledge the audience.*

Please note we always sing to an audience even if no one is there.

15. *Pitch*

Write the notes along your sheet music and stop along the way to check you're still on pitch.

16. *Listen...to yourself and to those around you.*

If you can't hear them you can't blend.

17. *Silent breaths (in the vowel shape of your next word),*

18. *It's about connection, not perfection.*

Sing with your feelings.

19. *Gateways and paths...look for where you go wrong in a song.*

It will be something you did the line before. Remember triggers for better paths.

20. *Chocolate, teriyaki, ice cream, rotten fish!*

Think of these things to improve performance, and relate them to love, happiness or sorrow.

DEAR BABS

The Kentonian is proud to announce the appointment of our first ever Agony Aunt, BABS, who is here to solve your personal problems. You can send your problems in confidence to Editor@thekentones.co.uk

Disclaimer: All characters and situations - even those based on real people and events - are entirely fictional.

DEAR BABS: *I'm addicted to chocolate biscuits, and just can't help myself when I see them in the tin! This is becoming a problem, especially when I'm in company.*

BABS SAYS: Everyone likes a 'choccy bikkie', but they do not need to come in a quartet, trio or even a duo! Some may say why worry when you've paid for them but we all know the saying, 'a moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips'. When in company, perhaps try cutting back to two biscuits - one chocolate and the other plain - you don't want people talking about you!

It won't be easy, but do take one day at a time and lean on friends and family for help.

DEAR BABS: *I recently found myself driving down steps and I don't know why. Can you help me?*

BABS SAYS: Hmm...this is a tricky one. Driving down steps can be very dangerous, not just for you and your car, but for pedestrians as well! If you feel this is a relationship issue, you could consider using 'traffic cones' in your relationship, if you feel that they would help. Many drivers automatically blame their partner for distracting them, but as you were on your own, we will need to look at other causes.

If you have recently been watching the Michael Caine film, **The Italian Job**, it could be that you subconsciously saw yourself whizzing around the streets and steps of Rome? Talking to a close friend who can help steer you in the right direction will help matters.

Maybe you were preoccupied by listening to teach tracks in your car, or perhaps you need to sit on a booster seat to help you see the front of your car more clearly?

My support pack **How to Drive in the UK** should also assist you and includes details of excellent courses run by the **AA**, which will help you avoid making this mistake again. (No, I'm not talking about the 12 steps program, that's another **AA** altogether!)

DEAR BABS: *I fear that my husband of many years may be straying. He has always been the most un-romantic of men, but recently he has begun muttering in his sleep about giving his heart to someone. Another night he was talking about love coming just in time. Also, he has started going out alone on Sundays and I heard him on the phone booking a weekend in a Bournemouth hotel. When confronted, he gave excuses about a Convention and extra practice, but it sounded unconvincing to me. This has made me suspicious. What should I do?*

BABS SAYS: There may be many explanations for your husband's activities and indeed, he could be involved with another woman. Tell him that you cannot stay in a relationship without honesty, and that if he has a problem you are ready to help. He must swear that he'll be true to you by the stars that shine above. But if he continues behaving like this, I think he may have tossed the losing dice and crossed too many bridges - it's over.

A Conversation With Our Almoner

2023 is a landmark year for Colin Couves. He celebrates his 80th birthday on June 24. But this genial, energetic man, stalwart of ***The Kentones*** and committed volunteer for several other good causes, has no intention of putting his feet up yet. “I like to keep busy,” he says. “In fact, I *NEED* to keep busy.”

As ***The Kentonian*** will see, this is something of an understatement.

Colin was born in 1943 in Derby, where his family lived with relatives who ran the **White Hart Hotel**, Duffield. “I used to help my uncle run the pub - from age five, I was pulling pints behind the bar!” he remembers.

When he was nine, his family moved south to Gravesend, due to his father’s job as an engineer. Colin grew up with a passion for sport (possibly inherited from his uncle, who played for Blackburn Rovers) which has never left him, his favourite sports being cricket and hockey. He played hockey at County level for both Kent and Surrey.

After leaving Milton Court School, he started work - first for an insurance company, then a bank. “But it wasn’t exciting enough, and I was a little bit bored,” he recalls. So in 1968, he joined the Metropolitan Police. His first posting was to West End Central Police Station, covering the varied patch of St James, Mayfair and Soho.

“Unfortunately, it wasn’t as thrilling as I’d hoped,” he confesses. “There was a lot of point duty - basically, that meant standing guard for eight hours at a time outside important London buildings like the American Embassy. While on point, I had to carry a handgun, but thankfully over the years I never had any reason to fire it!

“On the other hand, I loved working with the public, and as a police officer I found that I was good with people.”

Colin lived in a dormitory at a police section house until 1969 when he married his lovely wife Sue, after meeting her at Gravesend Cricket and Tennis Club (he was a cricketer, of course, and she played tennis). The couple went on to have two sons, Andrew and Jonathan. Today they’re the proud grandparents of seven

grandchildren, one of whom, Daniel, is a police officer with Sussex Police.

Sue, who has also given much support to ***The Kentones*** over the years, and made countless cuppas at weekly meetings, celebrated her own 80th birthday in January.

In 1974, Colin moved to the CID, where he was soon posted to Deptford, then Ladywell Police Stations. Two years later, he was asked to join the Fraud Squad, working with them on and off for the rest of his police career. He recalls: “In the beginning, I was investigating a lot of company fraud. For example, there was an auction house moving around the country, supposedly selling people’s valuables. In fact, they helped themselves to the valuables, never paid anyone and then skipped town - only to resurface many miles away. That case went to the Old Bailey and the mastermind got three or four years in jail.”

He remembers a big case involving London council officials who were being handsomely bribed to place contracts. “It always tickled me, that this one came to light when one of the crooked officials, who went to a pub every Friday to collect his bung, ticked somebody off - and he was then insulted by being given a cheese sandwich instead of a wad of cash. He was so furious, he got straight onto the **News of the**

Colin and sister



Colin and Sue



World, to blow the whistle!

“At the other end of the scale, I also investigated several fake Christmas Clubs - basically, poor people ripping off other poor people. Families scrimped and scraped all year to pay into a weekly Christmas Club, then come December, they’d get a cheque that bounced. The sums involved were small, but for the victims it was very upsetting. “When investigating fraud of any kind, the most important thing was, usually, to follow the money. That involved a lot of detailed, painstaking detective work, but I rather liked it, and of course it got a lot easier after computers became widespread.” Colin spent the last years in his job with the murder squad, before retiring in 1998, aged 55.

Afterwards he worked for almost 20 years as a cricket and hockey coach. “Thankfully, I went through all those years with the police force without ever being assaulted or attacked by any member of the public. But as a coach, I had one child who really went for me, biting and scratching me; and another very tall lad who came at me swinging a hockey stick like a lethal weapon!’ he muses.

Meanwhile, all his life, music has been important to him. In boyhood, he was head chorister at his local church. After learning piano in his youth, 50 years later he returned to studying the instrument, passing eight grade exams.



However, he didn’t start singing again until he was nearing retirement, after hearing *The Kentones* perform at a Masonic event. Colin says: “I’d never even heard of barbershop singing before, but I loved it, straight away. Just the sound of the harmonies. Afterwards I got chatting to some of the guys in the bar. They recruited me that night!”

Colin has now been part of the chorus for 34 years. He started off in the baritones, but has sung with most sections over the years. He has experienced 11 Musical Directors (including a tall lady affectionately known as Big Sue, with Colin’s petite wife being Little Sue). He has also acted as Musical Director himself, when needed, taking *The Kentones* to Convention one year, and achieving one of their best results ever. “But I never wanted to do that for very long. Didn’t want the responsibility. I just wanted to enjoy the singing, and was always glad to get back on the risers,” he says.

“The chorus has added a lot to my life, and over time, I’ve made so many good friends there. Some have now passed on, and I get a little sad, looking at old photographs and remembering members who’ve now gone. But the

music goes on, and that’s the part I’ve always loved most.” Today Colin is still contributing as much as ever. He acts as The Kentones’ almoner, so spends a lot of time keeping in touch with members and ex-members who are poorly, and sending flowers when necessary. And he is a leading light and former director with **Acafellas**: “I like **Acafellas** because we get to sing a bigger variety of songs and do more gigs.” He has also sung with two barbershop quartets, **City Limits** and **Southern Brand**.

Besides music, there has always been sport in his life, of course. Colin played both hockey and cricket for the Met, and cricket for the British police team. Since 1969, he has belonged to **Blackheath Hockey Club**, the world’s oldest hockey club, formed in 1861. For many years he was a coach there, and today he’s President of the men’s section, which has 12 adult teams and 350 junior players.

Both Colin and Sue also love bowls, and are keen members of **Bromley Bowling Club**. Then there’s sailing.

The Couves owned a boat called **Questeur** - a four-berth sailing yacht - for a decade. They mostly sailed on the Medway but took the boat as far as Belgium. Last, but not least, among his interests, comes the **Thomas Philipot's Almshouses** charity. Colin is in charge of applications for the almshouses, situated just off High Street, Eltham, which he describes as "a nice, comfortable place to live" for deserving old folk.

There's no doubt about it, our Colin has the energy and enthusiasm of a man half his age, and is definitely NOT the average octogenarian.

After so many decades of sterling service and giving - both to the public and community groups - it would be understandable if the pipe and slippers beckoned. But that's not the way he wants it, and long may it continue so. "I definitely don't intend to slow up, any time soon. There's just too much to do," he smiles.

Happy Birthday Colin! *The Kentonian* wishes you many happy returns.

Tracy Gayton

Pam Shoebridge – Farewell And Thank You

Let's go back some 25 years or so when Barrie Newman, Chairman 1994/97, put forward the idea of starting a **Kentones Supporters' Club**. Many other choruses were already reaping the benefits of such a club, by helping on club nights with making refreshments so that the men didn't lose valuable rehearsal time, raising much needed funds by putting on social events, and generally taking pressure off the chorus in a multitude of ways.

Pam did all this. She was one of the first to join and became one of the most loyal and supportive Supporters' Club members. She couldn't do enough. So it is with sadness that I record her passing on 10th March in the PRUH at the age of 83. She'll be up there selling raffle tickets!



Jean Garelick

Friends of The Kentones

We were all very sad to learn of the passing of Pam. She was a longtime supporter of the **Kentones** and gave generously of her time and energy to encourage us, and help make things run smoothly by working away in the background. Her warm-hearted spirit and her welcoming smile always gave us a lift, never more so than when making and serving tea for us on Thursday evenings. Memories of her will always bring cheer to our hearts. Thank you, Pam, for all you did, and for giving us such loyal backing over the years.

David Southgate.

Getting To Know Our New Members

After preparing the ingredients for one of my signature dinner courses, slow cooked Malaysian Rendang, on Sunday 18 September 2022, I was reading the local paper and came across a **Learn to Sing** session advertised by *The Kentones*, a group I had not heard of before. The last time I sang I was aged 15, sitting around a campfire with a group of other Boy Scouts. Most of the songs were sung loudly with gusto, and definitely not in tune! Kevin (Phillips) kindly replied to my email enquiry and said he looked forward to seeing me in a couple of weeks.

I then spent some time finding out more about *The Kentones*, and found many interesting links on Google and YouTube; my reaction was “Heck, these guys are very experienced and able to sing without accompanying music and words, are of the highest professional standard, able to harmonise, keep rhythm, tempo and melody!”

This is definitely not me, as I have no confidence, and panic with stage fright, and previous attempts to sing were really bad like the proverbial frog! I told myself that I must send a polite email to Kevin to say “thanks, but no thanks”.

Over the days, work took over and I forgot to send the email! On the day, I was embarrassed and told myself it would be very rude not to turn up. The guys were really welcoming and friendly and before I knew it, I was told I would join the Lead group and after a very capable training session with Jack, I was enjoying the company and singing parts of **Under the Boardwalk** along with others on the risers!

“What a truly wonderful group of guys”, I told my wife, Carol, at home, “everyone is so professional, friendly and excellent singers but it will be an uphill struggle for me to even come close”. The weekly training sessions continued, and each time Carol could see how much I was enjoying the experience and turned up to support the group singing at **The Walnuts**, which was very festive and truly enjoyable too. The newbies were then told we had to audition with a senior quartet before being invited to join the group, singing **Under the Boardwalk**. Practice, practice, practice would be the key, I told myself.

At my first audition, I had very bad stage fright and shaky nerves, I forgot the words(!) and not surprisingly, I flunked, and thought, “these are true professionals, and I will never be able to sing like any of them”. I then had a lightbulb moment, and decided to contact John Williams, our very capable and professional Musical Director to ask for a few individual lessons. Very graciously, John agreed, and after three lessons, he said that I had taken his tips and advice and was singing better! Despite the lessons, stage fright and nerves affected me again, and no one would be surprised that I did not pass the second audition. However, Jack, David, Alan and Frank were very supportive and complimentary, saying I was not tone deaf and with more practice, I would make it. After so many weeks, Carol was really sick of hearing **Boardwalk**! Two more lessons later with John, I had my third audition and was more confident. I actually remembered all the words and I think I was singing much better than before. No one was more pleased than I when John announced that both of the remaining newbies,

Joe Seet



Trevor and I, had passed!

In the coming weeks and months, I hope to maintain the standard required to continue singing with all you very experienced barbershoppers at the charity sing-outs and eventually at Convention!

Joe Seet

I've always enjoyed singing. As a kid growing up in Harrogate in the 1960s, the radio was always tuned to the **BBC Light Programme**. Fifties crooners were my daily musical diet until the **Beatles** changed everything. I sang in the local church choir and in various school choirs. After my voice broke, singing was confined to the shower and the car. My efforts in the car were not always appreciated. I was usually allowed just a few minutes of vocalisation before being asked to "please stop, Dad".

I was a civil servant for just over 30 years, starting off in the Employment Department at a time of very high unemployment in the early 1980s. After various departmental mergers and de-mergers, I ended up in the Education Department. Most of the time I was advising Ministers, writing their speeches and replying to their correspondence and questions in Parliament. Among the things I worked on were the school performance tables, improving behaviour and attendance in schools and teaching reading through phonics.

When I retired (very early), I decided to take up singing again and joined a couple of local community choirs – the **Langley Boys' School Community Choir** and **Sing Bromley**. Each term, we rehearse a few numbers for a concert at the end of term, usually accompanied by a band and maybe another choir. At one of our concerts, a few years ago, we had a guest turn from a barbershop outfit called **The Kentones**. The guys brought the house down with their wonderful, rich sound. At the time, I thought I'd love to have a go at that style of singing, but didn't take it any further.

One of the problems with being a chap in a community choir is that you're heavily outnumbered by the ladies. It's a bit dispiriting sometimes at the end of a concert to be told that people enjoyed it, but "we couldn't hear the men". So last year I thought again about barbershop singing. I found out that **Acafellas** were performing at a local church in Beckenham and went along to listen. I enjoyed what they did and during the tea break someone gave me a flyer about **The Kentones Learn to Sing** course. I decided it was now or never and took the plunge. It has been great to be made so welcome as a candidate member of the chorus. It's also daunting when most of the chorus has so much repertoire in its collective memory. There is a lot of catching-up to be done and singing from memory is a real challenge. Having sung Bass with the Langley choir and "bottom" with **Sing Bromley**, I was a bit surprised to be steered to the Lead section after my initial try-out. A few attempts at the high notes in **Under The Boardwalk** quickly convinced me that Lead was not for me, so I switched to Baritone. Time will tell

Nick Baxter



if that's where I belong.

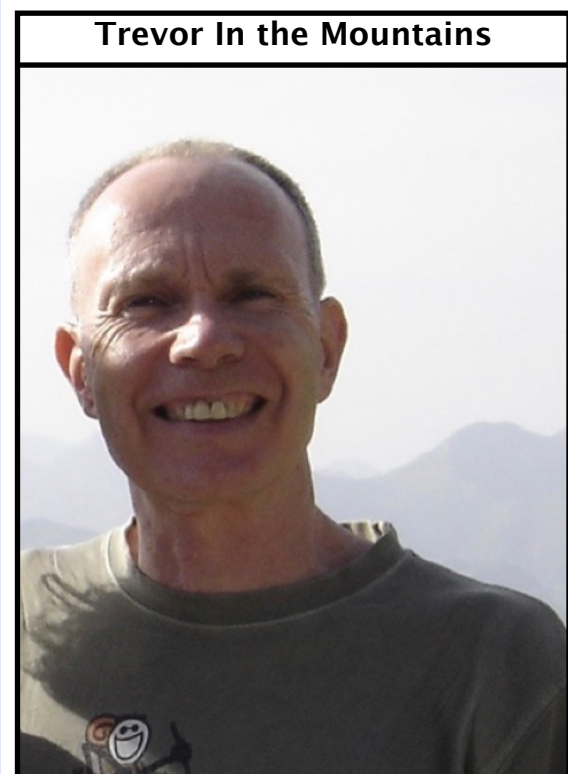
As for the other biographical stuff, I'm married to Jane and we have one son, Dominic. He married a lovely Turkish girl, Alev, and they have given us a beautiful grand-daughter, Nova, now 2 years old. Jane and I love to travel, and for several years now we have been systematically ticking off the items on our bucket list. It remains to be seen whether the destinations run out before the money does. I also play Bridge and am Chair and Treasurer of a club which plays in Hayes every Monday evening. We need new members, so I'm shamelessly using the pages of *The Kentonian* to advertise for anyone who might be interested.

And I do Custody Visiting, which involves calling in at the Bromley police cells without notice to check on the welfare of the detainees. It's a salutary reminder that some people have really tough lives, even in a prosperous borough like Bromley.

I look forward to getting fully involved with the activities of the chorus and getting to know its members better. Here's to a successful Convention in May!

Nick Baxter

I was born and raised in the Midlands, attending a small junior school where the Head Teacher introduced me to



Trevor In the Mountains

singing, and helped get me through the audition for a church choir with a great reputation. Sadly, this was largely lost on me at that time since my sole interest was football. She also coached me to pass my 11+ and attendance at Leamington College for Boys (the local grammar school); where they didn't play football and music was really 'high brow'.

Fortunately the art teacher was great and nurtured another passion of mine, painting in water colours. My classmates introduced me to an eclectic mix of music ranging from heavy rock to classical via soul, blues and the pop duo, **Sparks!**

In my twenties I attended Bristol Polytechnic, qualifying with a 2.1 in Quantity Surveying and a move to London and a very rewarding career. More importantly that's where I met Sally, my wife, and established roots in Petts Wood.

At University another friend introduced me to trekking in the mountains, and Sally also shares my love of walking and the great

outdoors.

In 2019 I qualified as a leader for a holiday company specialising in guided walking and took early retirement to pursue this opportunity. Retirement has also allowed me to focus on my artwork and other hobbies. Attending *The Kentones Learn to Sing* course has reintroduced me to singing, albeit 50 years later; and the realisation of just how joyous and rewarding it can be - which will come as no surprise to my fellow **Kentones**.

Trevor Spike

The Barbershop Dynamo

I have been speaking to John Williams about the many barbershop hats he wears when not with *The Kentones*. Amazingly, he also sings with: **MaleVox** Chorus (Bass) **EQR** Mixed Chorus (Bass) **Bar-Code** Men's National Quartet (Bass) **High Mileage** Men's National Quartet (Lead) **Setting Sons** Men's Senior Quartet (Bass) **Powerhouse** Mixed Quartet (Bass)

As we know, rehearsal with **Male Vox** takes place fortnightly in Birmingham. In the last 18 and a half months he has put 45,000 miles on his car. "Madness, I know" he says, "but so worth it".

John not only spends his time rehearsing with these choruses, he is also involved in competing with them.

Powerhouse recently competed at the **Northamptonshire Music Festival** in Harrogate, where they were pleased to win a bronze medal, especially as this was only their second contest, having finished 5th in UK finals last year.

He will also be competing with **EQR** mixed chorus, and **High Mileage** and **Powerhouse** quartets at **SABS** (Spanish Barbershop Association) from 13th to 16th April. He is hoping for a top five in the chorus and a top ten in both quartets...but, he says "We will see!"

At Convention he is not only directing *The Kentones* but singing with **Male Vox** and **EQR**. It all seems like a lot of hard work, but as John says, "not if you enjoy it!"

Martin Gayton

Dick Taylor

Following the funeral of Dick Taylor (see December 2022 issue of *The Kentonian*) the Club received a donation of £490 for the Club and the following from Dick's son and comments from the *Just Giving* page:

"Just wanted to say thank you for attending my Dad's funeral and performing. It was a really nice tribute to Dad who, despite only being in the Chorus for a short period of time, absolutely loved singing with you.

I remember him practising all the time, and he loved to sing. Everybody I spoke to during and after the day said it was wonderful that you all made the effort to come along to sing.

So please pass on my thanks to everybody who came, and everybody who had him in mind that day but couldn't make it. Best wishes to you all for the future: I hope to come along to some future performances."

Comments from the Just Giving page:

It's always nice to have more music in your life! Dick's love of barbershop and **The Kentones** was evident and inspiring, and pushed me to join my local wind orchestra.

Thank you for supporting our dear Uncle Richard (Dick). We are so glad he had good friends to help him sing. He always loved music and friends.

Thanks for all that you did for Dad. He loved singing with all of you. Wishing you all the very best for the future.

Alan Lucking sent the following replies on behalf of the Club:

Thank you so much. The comments mean so much to us, and it's nice to be reminded of how much music and membership of a musical group means to so many. I remember so many good times hearing Dick and Ronnie talking about their experiences whilst being driven home by Peter Aylett. Your Dad was a wonderful, kind and funny man, and has been missed from **The Kentones** for many years. He touched so many hearts and it was a pleasure to have sung with him and finally celebrate his life in November.

Thank you so much for the kind donations made on behalf of your Dad for **The Kentones**. The final figure was £490, so please pass on our thanks to anyone you know who generously donated. The money will be invested into helping others to discover the joy of singing and being part of **The Kentones** family.

The Levadas of Madeira

No, John Williams has not introduced a new song into the repertoire, although it does have a certain ring to it. Nor is it a special type of bread! Levadas are small aqueducts which bring water down from the wet mountainous areas of North Madeira to irrigate farms in the drier southern regions of the Portuguese island. To celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary, Tracy and I booked a holiday called “Walking the Levadas” in September 2022.

Walking along a maintenance path



The word Levada is derived from the Portuguese word *levar* meaning to carry, and is roughly translated as carriageway. These narrow canals - they are approximately 1 metre wide - deliver water over long distances to banana plantations, vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens, as well as to hydro-electric power stations.

Tracy and me by a Levada



There are 200 levadas - the earliest date from early 16th century - criss-crossing the mountains, and they cover a total distance of approx 2500km. The water is either stored in reservoirs along the route or channelled directly onto the agricultural land via a sluice gate. Each farm may only take a limited, agreed amount of water which is strictly policed. Anyone found to be using more than their ration may have their allocation reduced in subsequent years.

The gradual gradient of the Levadas, used to slow down the speed of the water, and a maintenance path running alongside, provide ideal conditions for easy walking trails, and their importance as an attraction to both tourists and locals has grown in recent years. Our holiday was a fantastic way of seeing the beautiful island of Madeira.

Martin Gayton (Ed)

Typical farm with terraces



30 Years of Convention

As Convention is coming upon us once again, I thought it a good time to recall some of the Prelims and Conventions which, for good reasons or bad, remain lodged in my memory. For our newer members, the format for competition was different years ago. The Prelims were held in autumn and divided North and South of the country, with the top 10 choruses from both halves competing at Convention.

Prelims 1996, Brean Sands.

Brean Sands in Somerset was a holiday camp which had closed for the season but reopened with minimal staff as a venue for the contest. The chalet accommodation was classed as *standard* or *deluxe*. Avril and I booked a deluxe. We soon discovered that the only difference between the two was that the so called *deluxe* chalet provided towels! It was fortunate that we had packed our own, as exploring the camp later we came across a very disconsolate Ron and Barbara Measure (Ron founded the Club) who were, to put it mildly, not amused with their standard accommodation and lack of towels. They were forever grateful for the loan of ours. Heating and light was provided through a prepayment slot meter using tokens, a quantity of which was initially provided. The main problem was that being November it got dark early and the site was only minimally lit. Eventually locating our deluxe accommodation, the next test was to find the meter inside a pitch black room. No mean feat. After much fumbling around, (and cursing) I found the meter and inserted the first token. Immediately we were dazzled by the power of the 60 watt lamp and the bunk bed sleeping arrangements! It was a very cold night, so we fed the remaining tokens into the meter, but by 6.30am we awoke feeling decidedly chilly. It was not much fun wandering around a cold and windy site in the grey dawn trying to find a member of staff from whom I could buy more tokens.

The meals on offer were canteen style rather than restaurant, and could be described as adequate, especially if you liked baked beans. (I'm being kind!). So we decided to leave the camp and search for a more inviting hostelry with a decent bill of fare. Having perused the menu, we made our choice and waited for someone to take our order. We waited and waited, getting more than a trifle irritated, so eventually I went to the bar to enquire/ complain. This was when I discovered that you had to order your meals from the bar with your table number. A very patient barman explained the system, and rather red-faced I went back to our table to find the number. We did eventually have a very nice meal with not a baked bean in sight.

The competition was not without hiccups either. Due to the breakdown of their hired minibus, the majority of the chorus were stranded at the road side until they were eventually towed away. The whole running order of the competition had to be altered and *The Kentones* eventually arrived and were slotted in to sing last.

Convention 1999, Blackpool

On this occasion we all travelled to Blackpool in a large coach, eventually arriving at The Georgian Hotel. The 'Hotel' we discovered was made up of three, old four storey terraced houses that had been knocked into one. Our room was so small that only one person could stand up at a time, as the double bed, pushed against one wall, took up all of the space. In the corner was a shower so small, that if you dropped the soap, you had to open the sliding door to bend down to retrieve it. The TV was attached to a retractable bracket on the wall that I constantly banged my head on. Oh, such luxury! The memorable evening meal did not cater for vegetarians, they ran out of potatoes and the wine list comprised red or white Lambrusco!

It appears that the folk up North do like a bit of entertainment, and the basement was used for this most evenings. One particular evening a singer/keyboard player, who wasn't half bad, was in the middle of his act when water started to pour through the ceiling. We were amazed, if not a trifle bemused, to see a member of staff amble across the room pushing a wheelie bin to catch the flow of water. And the keyboard player didn't miss a beat! This must have been a regular occurrence as nobody seemed at all surprised. And before you ask, no it wasn't part of the act.

Avril's abiding memory is of walking along the promenade where we could not help but notice the number of souvenir shops from whose canvas awnings swung, in the icy wind, a selection of naked, life size, pink plastic dolls. I wonder if any member of the chorus has such a souvenir tucked away somewhere!

Over the years there have been many memories. But it's the strange ones that stand out.

Chris Sydee

Caption Corner

Our Convention rehearsal day at Eltham College was eventful for many reasons. Not least, was Treasurer and Bass Lead, Alan Lucking's attempt at parking his car. Luckily Alan and his car survived and we managed to lift the car back to the roadway.

Alan has provided us with ideal material for a caption corner. Please send your caption, hopefully witty and humorous, to Editor@thekentones.co.uk



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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