

After several bouts of letter writing the first meetings were held during OCTOBER 1974, in the Holy Family social club, Ingol. Average attendance - 8, interested and willing if somewhat inexperienced 'HARMONIZERS'



● Alf Mee conducts his choir during one of their rehearsals. Left to right: Tom Green, Albert Tierney, John Arkwright, Joe Allan, Stan Fletcher, Lawrence Dunnagan, and Alf Mee.

## Barber Shop singers hit the high notes

THE unique sounds of those old style barbers' shop choirs can now be heard in Preston.

And the barber-shop singing bug has so bitten members of the Holy Family Social club at Ingol, that they've formed their own special choir.

Organist and choir-master, Mr Alfred Mee is the man behind it all, and he expects to have some 50 members if all goes well over the next few weeks.

— have to be observed.

### Starter Kit

To form the choir, Mr Mee obtained a special 'starter kit' from the association, which is affiliated to the American association.

All the songs are strict copyright, and can only

be performed for charity

"We don't stick on false moustaches or anything like that" added Mr Mee "We just enjoy the singing.

"You don't need a trained voice, and it's amazing the amount of interest from people once they realise what it is all about."

He's got nine regular members — among them local singer Mr Tom Green, and secretary of the Preston and district cricket league Mr George Sharples.

Rehearsals are held each Tuesday evening.

### Special

But what's so special about barber shop singing?

"There's just nothing at all like it," said Mr Mee, who became interested after seeing an American choir. "Once it's got hold of you you're hooked for good."

LANCS EVENING POST,

## Fine voices determined to keep in good trim!

By TERRY FARRELL

IT WOULDN'T be much use trying to persuade any of the nine members of the Preston Barbershop Harmony Group to give you a "short back and sides", a trim, or even a shave.

As they would admit themselves — they would be just up the pole.

But when it comes to harmony singing their aim is to head for the top in the field of amateur entertainment.

The men come from all walks of life and such diverse jobs as auctioneer's clerk, fireman, dock cargo inspector and ex-shop-keeper.

### Enthusiastic

Until they joined the Barbershop group recently, a few of them hardly knew the difference between tonic solfa and tonic water.

Now, under their enthusiastic founder and conductor, Alf Mee, of Berwick Drive, Fulwood, the men have learnt to read music and are gradually getting their voices into trim at weekly rehearsals in the Holy Family Social Centre, Ingol.

The group is non-sectarian and have been recognised for membership of the British Association of Barbershops. The Preston group, who began singing only a few months ago, are the first such group in the North - West.

Barbershoppers were started in the USA by a group of singing hairdressers many years ago to help children with speech difficulties. Now the groups are spreading fast in Britain, mainly to aid charities.

Although they sing without musical accompaniment, they are careful to point out that they are different from glee singers in that they often have to sing against each other and their top tenors sometimes have to sing above tune.

Their range of songs includes popular favourites of bygone years.

### Traditional

Alf, who is organist and choir-master of St Anthony's Church, explained: "The lads are as keen as mustard on singing and we would like to see barbershop singing expanded throughout the area. What we need now are one or two men with falsetto or yodeling type voices.

"Barbershoppers sing without musical accompaniment because it is traditional and also so that the singers' voices can be heard with purity — and that is where constant practice is needed." Alf says he would be interested to hear from anyone who would like an audience — including those who consider themselves "flat."

Apart from builder's supplier Tom Green, who used to sing with Preston Cecilians, most of the group have never sung in public before.

Recently, the Barbershoppers gave their first concert for hospital patients. Now they are poised to let their voices be heard by a much wider audience.

PRESTON BARBERSHOP HARMONY CLUB.

Driving force behind the formation of our club Mr Alf Mee, whose interest was aroused by the BBC programme "SHORT BACK AND SIDES"