



24 JUNE 77

Preston's Barber Shop Harmony Club

Barber shop sound is hitting the high notes of success

24 JUNE '77

By
JOHN MORRELL

THERE was a time when no show — whether staged in music hall or church hall — was complete without a few unaccompanied choruses rendered "at enormous expense" by the barber's shop quartet.

Hair, dripping with sufficient oil to almost warrant nationalisation, was slicked into place.

Moustaches bristled and right-angled arms gripped the inevitable napkin as the harmonious foursomes launched into their keenly-pitched programme.

So what happened to the barber's shop style singing? Did it surrender to the rockers?

No! Like Old Father Thames, it keeps rolling along and here in Preston, thanks to the Barbershop Harmony Club, it is almost on the crest of a wave!

Formed by a handful of members of the Holy Family Club, Ingol, and guided by the tuneful tuition of Mr Alf Mee, of Berwick Drive, Fulwood, the club has grown in size and ability since those early days of 1974.

Raised

They have raised more than £150 for the Preston and District Nurses to Lourdes Organisation, and delighted hundreds of people in the area.

Mr Mee, the club's founder who relinquished office earlier this year because of his many commitments, said: "I saw a TV series 'Short, Back and Sides' which featured many American quartets and groups and it all sprang from that. I contacted Chuck O'Dom, head of the British Association of Barbershoppers in Brighton and he sent different pieces of music, which we practised at the Holy Family Club."

"More members joined and eventually we started giving concerts."

"Everyone was very keen to learn and I taught them how to read music, scrounged parts from all over the place, including the East Yorks Club in Orono, Canada. It was a long hard haul, but then we did a tape for Radio Blackburn which was broadcast and things started to happen."

Four of the originals, Tom Green, of Bexhill Road, Ingol; Joe Allen, of Wellington Street, Ashton; Jack Arkwright, who used to live at Marshall Grove, Ingol, but has since moved to Leeds; and Mr Mee rehearsed quartet work. They became known as the Insoleers.

Invited

They were invited to appear on Granada TV and also featured in many of the club's shows. They have since been succeeded by another quartet, the Red Rose Four, consisting of David Mahon, the club's chorus director, Bernard Davis, the secretary-treasurer, John Smith and Brian Jones.

Mr Mee said: "I had to leave the club through health and pressure of work and because I not only play the organ three nights weekly at Holy Family Club but am organist and choir-master at St Anthony's Church in Fulwood. It is good to see it flourishing."

Club chairman, Mr George Sharples, said: "We are in contact with similar clubs throughout the country and regularly go to Liverpool to sing for them."

while they come here to sing for us."

Secretary Mr Davis added: "There must be many more nostalgic singers locally, who enjoy harmony singing. They would be very welcome to join us. We rehearse every Tuesday at the Holy Family Club."



KING STREET
BLACKBURN LANCs BB2 2EA
TEL. 0254 62411
TELEX 63491

6th July 1977.

Mr. H.B. Davis,
530, New Hall Lane,
PRESTON PR1 4 TD.

Dear Bernard,

Many thanks for joining us on Grapevine. As far as Mike Marsh and I are concerned this was a real highlight and enjoyed by one and all.

As promised I enclose a copy of the broadcast (tape speed $3\frac{3}{4}$ i.p.s.)

I also look forward to 'Sounds Local' soon.
Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Keith Daniels
KEITH DANIELS
Magazine Editor

Encl: