



The Choir in 1916

The Choir was founded originally in October 1916 by Mr. W. H. Batey as Ashington Male Voice Choir.

When you look at the history of Ashington & District Male Choir, it is evident that the continuation of the Choir is due to determination.

The programme from the Choir's 70th Anniversary Annual Celebrity Concert states "Love of music, and love of one's fellow man", shown so steadfastly throughout the years by sincere, loyal men.'

The Choir has entertained audiences across the region and overseas and performs a varied selection of songs. It is appropriate that several numbers are about coal mining as Ashington was once famous as 'the largest coal mining village in the world'.

Surviving the Covid pandemic, which impacted on many community choirs, this traditional male voice choir from Ashington continues to flourish and attract new members.

This information sheet reviews 'The History of ADMVC from 1916 to 1966'.

A Strong Foundation for the Choir

Ashington Male Voice Choir

When the Choir was founded, it was recorded in the Council minutes of 22nd September 1916 – 'A letter was received from the Ashington Male Voice Choir asking for the use of the Council Chamber on Wednesday night of each week for practices. The object of the Choir was for advancing musical education in the District and for helping local authorities. It was agreed that the use of the Council Chamber be granted on the usual terms.'

Mr W. H. Batey, who was acknowledged as a fine local musician, was the founder of the Choir. He laid the foundations of successful choral singing of a high standard winning many contests and earning a fine reputation for the Choir.

The Impact of the Strike in 1926

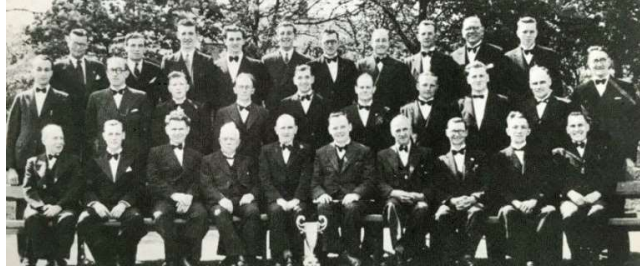
The strike of 1926 affected the Choir with attendances falling and "the choir funds were used to alleviate financial distress of fellow members". Wallsend Male Voice Choir offered the Choir financial help towards meeting the costs of entering musical contests.

In 1932, Mr. Batey resigned as Conductor and as the membership was declining and no new members joining, the Choir was temporarily disbanded.

The Reformation of the Choir in 1936

In 1936, the Choir was reformed by Mr. Allington and Mr. Nesbitt. In response to a newspaper advert nine men turned up at the Industrial Working Men's Club.

One of those men was Mr. Jack Morton who went on to complete over 50 years' service. He reminisces that the 'Music Kist' holding all the Choir's music at that time was kept under the bed of Harold Drinkwater, Choir Secretary, and that an open-air concert to be given in the Hirst Park on 3rd September 1939 (the day war broke out!) had to be cancelled.



The Choir in 1948

The Choir in the Second World War

Mr. Nesbitt's son, Dennis, conducted the Choir before joining the forces in the Second World War. He later became principal cellist with The London Symphony Orchestra.

In 1956 he was invited to Ashington as Guest Soloist, and Guest Conductor, at a concert to mark the amalgamation of the depleted Morpeth and Newbiggin Male Voice Choirs with Ashington Male Voice Choir, which then altered its title to 'Ashington & District Male Voice Choir'.

The Formation of Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

The Choir was in danger of disbanding in 1953 when Conductor Mr. Joe Dawes resigned and again in 1960 when Conductor Mr. Arthur Johnson resigned, but at the Special Meetings held on both occasions the decision to continue was taken by a small group of loyal men.

During this period, the Choir amalgamated with the depleted Morpeth and Newbiggin Male Voice Choirs and in 1956, the **Ashington & District Male Voice Choir** was launched.

Both Mr. Dawes and Mr. Johnson maintained the high standard of singing.

Mr. Johnson took the Choir to Blackpool Musical Festival and the Choir were winners at musical contests each year from 1953 to 1960 while he was Conductor.

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

Web: <https://www.ashingtonmalevoicechoir.org.uk>

Also on Facebook and YouTube.

The Foundations of a New Era for the Choir

The appointment of a new Music Team

In 1960, Mr. Steve Howard was appointed Conductor and Miss Ella Hughes was appointed accompanist. Mr. Howard continued the Choir's success at contests.

He introduced an Honorary Members Scheme, providing community and stakeholder support for the Choir.

Steve Howard organised the Choir's first Annual Concert which was held in November 1963, in the Technical College. Guest artists were Wendy Eathorne, soprano and Geoffrey Pratley, piano. They were students at the Royal Academy in London, and later went on to be top international artists.

During this period, the Choir reached its 50th Anniversary in 1966.

In 1969, Steve Howard resigned his position within the Choir and Ella Hughes was appointed conductor. This marked the start of a new chapter in the history of Ashington & District Male Voice Choir.

You can learn about the next chapter in the Choir's history by checking out the information sheet, 'ADMVC 12 – The History of ADMVC from 1967 to 2016.'



The Choir in 1953

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir Information Sheets

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir is producing a range of information sheets on various topics, including on the heritage of the Choir. They will be published within the Choir website.