



The Choir at Central Hall in 1978

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 1967 to 2016'.

Working towards a Centenary in 2016

The Start of a New Era of Recognition

When Steve Howard resigned in 1968, Ella Hughes, who had been accompanist, became conductor.

By 1973, the Choir's membership had grown from 25 to 47 voices and in that year the Choir competed at Blackpool Musical Festival. The Choir were winners at competitive musical festivals each year from 1970 to 1980, except in 1973 and 1979.

In 1972, they were awarded the John Gillespie Trophy at Tynedale Musical Festival for the highest marks for an own choice piece and were awarded the Rose Bowl as winners at Stanley Festival.

In 1974, as winners at Stockton Musical Festival, Noel Cox, adjudicator, wrote of them "a sensitive group who make MUSIC when they sing."

Later in 1980, the Choir was awarded a winning mark of 91 by adjudicator, Graham Garton, who wrote 'The ensemble was excellent and the control at the soft ending was one of the most memorable moments of this Festival.'

Top Professional Guest Artists support the Choir

In 1976, the Choir began engaging top professional guest artists to appear at its Annual Concerts. The 1976 Annual Concert featured Maryetta and Vernon Midgley who returned to Ashington with their mother, Gladys, for the 70th Anniversary Annual Celebrity Concert on Saturday, 25th October 1986.

Other guest artists have included Philip Langridge, Joan Savage, Anne Lorne-Gillies, Peter Morrison, Marilyn Hill-Smith, and the Band of H.M. Royal Marines.

New Patron Scheme, Newsletter and Uniform

In 1977, the Choir's present patrons' scheme was introduced, and a regular Choir Newsletter was first distributed. Since then, the Choir's patrons have given support in many helpful ways.

After successful fund raising, the Choir was able to introduce the famous 'blue blazers' in 1984.



Ashington and Dahlerbruck Choirs in 1985

Forging Strong Musical Partnerships

The Dahlerbruck Partnership

In 1978, the Choir was invited by Wansbeck Council to take part in an exchange visit with the Dahlerbruck-Rotthausen Male Voice Choir from Schalkesmuehle, one of Wansbeck's twin towns in West Germany.

The Choir enjoyed a wonderful first visit, singing in concert with 32 choirs, cruising along the River Rhine, visiting Bohn and best of all forming firm friendships.

The Dahlerbruck Choir was welcomed on its third visit to Ashington in October 1985. The Choir's third visit to Germany was on 1st October 1988.

The National Association of Choirs

The Choir joined the National Association of Choirs in 1979, which brought it into contact with other Northeast Choirs. As a member of the National Association of Choirs' North East Group, the Choir has enjoyed the privilege of taking part in Massed Choral Concerts in Darlington, the City Hall, Newcastle and singing in a memorable Massed Choral Concert in Durham Cathedral.

Kings Lynn Male Voice Choir

During 1980, the Choir also began exchange visits with the King's Lynn Male Voice Choir which was based in Norfolk. The King's Lynn Choir visited Ashington for the 3rd time in 1986 to take part in a successful joint concert to commemorate the Choir's 70th Anniversary on 4th October 1986.

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

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

Also on Facebook and YouTube.

The End of an Era but Creation of a New Future

The Legacy of Ella Hughes

Ella Hughes continued her outstanding commitment to the Choir until her retirement in 2008. Over the years, she contributed personal resources to help the Choir and brought international stars to perform at its Ashington concerts.

One of the highlights of Ella's time with the choir was the first performance of 'Fell 'Em Doon'. The oratorio was written by local men Mike Kirkup and Derek Hobbs, chronicling the birth of Ashington as "the biggest mining village in the world."

New Musical Directors at the Helm

Following Ella's retirement, Neil Morton took on the role of conductor and musical director. Neil had previously sung in the bass section of the Choir and had been accompanist. The then president of the Choir, Mike Kirkup, commented that "the appointment of Neil seems to have worked well" and that "he has brought in one or two innovations that have been well received."

Neil went on to lead the Choir up until 2015 when Jonathan Shaw led the Choir into their Anniversary Year in 2016. You can read about the Centenary Concert on 'ADMVC 1 – The Centenary Celebration Concert'.



The Choir in 2015

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.