



## Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

# The Dahlerbruck Choral Partnership



**The Rathaus in Schalksmuhle**

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

He laid the foundations of successful choral singing of a high standard winning many contests and earning a fine reputation for the Choir.

After surviving the 1926 General Strike and the Second World War, the Choir amalgamated in 1956 with the depleted Morpeth and Newbiggin Male Voice Choirs to form Ashington & District Male Voice Choir.

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 Dahlerbruck Choral Partnership'.

## Strong Anglo-German Partnerships

Long-standing friendships and twinning arrangements have existed between towns in Southeast Northumberland and the North Rhine-Westphalia region in Germany, since the 1950's.

**Remscheid** was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and remained a small village until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The City of Remscheid is now famous for mechanical engineering and toolmaking.

The partnership with the City evolved from initial youth exchanges dating back to 1950. The first youth officers to take part in and exchange were Mr McGlynn and Mr Nicholson from Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea.

This led to a partnership agreement being signed in 1978 between the former Wansbeck District Council and the City of Remscheid to seal the many exchanges which had taken place. A strong bond of friendship and close relationships have continued.

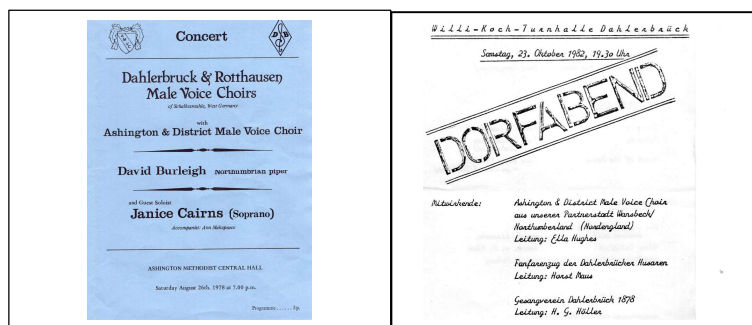
**Schalksmuhle** dates back to 1350 when the farmers of Hulscheid formed a free duchy. The current municipality was formed in 1969-70 when Schalksmuhle merged with Hulscheid and Dahlerbruck. It is important for its electrical industry.

The partnership with the former Wansbeck District Council, originally with the town of Bedlington, was founded in 1970. It was suggested by Klaus Floeren from Iserlohn, who worked in Bedlington, and met his wife, Muriel Binks. When they moved to Schalksmuhle with their son, Rolfe, they suggested the partnership, which has led to many exchanges between the two regions.

## Ashington & District Male Voice Choir and The Dahlerbruck Choir

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir was delighted to be requested by Wansbeck District Council to take part in a series of exchange visits with The Dahlerbruck Choir.

This led to both choirs taking part in 6 joint concerts in Ashington and Schalksmuhle. Some events also included other local German choirs, as well as local Northeast of England artists.



## Exchange Concerts in 1978 and 1982

### Friendships through Musical Exchanges

#### 26.08.1978 – Ashington Central Hall

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir welcomed the Dahlebruck and Rotthausen Male Voice Choirs to a joint concert at the Ashington Methodist Central Hall on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1978 at 7.00pm.

Guest artists were Janice Cairns, soprano and Ann Makepeace, accompanist, with David Burleigh, Northumbrian piper.

#### 11 to 18.10.1978 – Visit to Schalksmuhle

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir made their first visit to the Schalksmuhle region of West Germany.

#### 11.10.1980 – Ashington Central Hall

The Joint Concert at Ashington Methodist Central Hall was the highlight of the second visit by The Dahlebruck Choir. The newly formed mixed choir included members of the male voice choir which had taken part in the 1978 exchanges.

Guest artists included Carol Andrew, soprano and The Morpeth Highland Pipe Band.

#### 23.10.1982 – Visit to Schalksmuhle

As part of their second visit to Schalksmuhle, Ashington & District Male Voice Choir took part in a 'Dorfabend' (Village Evening) at the Willi-Koch-Turnhalle.

They were joined by Fanfarenzug and Gesangverein.

#### 06.10.1985 – Ashington High School

The Joint Concert with The Dahlebruck Choir at Ashington High School took part during European Music Year.

Shirley Wilkinson, soprano was the guest artist.

#### 01.10.1988 – Visit to Schalksmuhle

During their third visit to Western Germany, Ashington & District Male Voice Choir took part in 'Jubiläumskonzert' (Anniversary Concert) with several local choirs.

### Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

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

Also on Facebook and YouTube.

## Their Support will Never Be Forgotten

### The 1984 Coal Miners' Strike

The strong bond between Southeast Northumberland and the City of Remscheid was probably most evident during the Miners' Strike.

The German city donated substantial sums to the Miners' Hardship Fund in December 1984. Regular food parcels were sent from the local community. The city hosted 45 children for a holiday after the strike ended.

Ashington, in particular, will never forget this support from their German friends.

### The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir was honoured to be giving two performances at The Maritime Centre in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea on Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024 during a civic visit from the City of Remscheid.

'The Colliers' Requiem,' by Derek Hobbs and Mike Kirkup, was a most appropriate inclusion in the programme:

*'Let's close the door on what has gone before'*

*'Don't look back, move further up the track'*

*'One by one the mines have come and gone'*

*'One by one, now there's none'*

*'We sing a Requiem for Coal and Collier Men'*



Ashington and Dahlebruck Choirs in 1985

### 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.