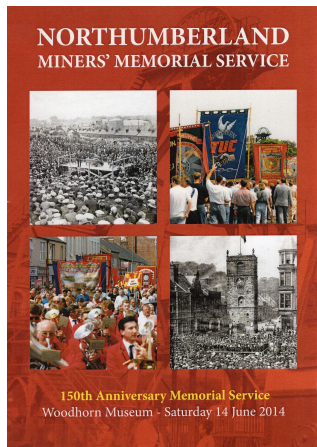




Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

The Miners' Picnic Memorial Service



The 150th Anniversary Memorial Service

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 Choir's association with 'The Miners' Picnic Memorial Service' in Northumberland.

A Regional Tribute to Coal Miners

Ashington has been recognised as 'the largest coal mining village in the world'.

Most people would therefore think that the town would have always hosted 'The Northumberland Miners' Picnic', but that is not the case.

The Northumberland Miners' Picnic

The Northumberland Picnic is ranked as one of the oldest in the country and is older than the famous Durham Miners' Gala, first held in 1871.

Over the years, the Picnic has moved around the county from Blyth to Morpeth, Bedlington to Ashington, Newbiggin, and even to Newcastle and Tynemouth. More picnics have been held in the market town of Morpeth than the heart of the Northumberland coalfield.

The Picnic celebrated its 150th Anniversary at Woodhorn Museum on Saturday, 14th June 2014.

The Miners' Picnic Memorial Service

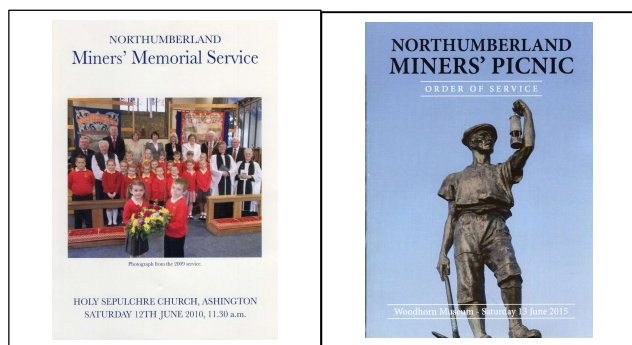
The first Miners' Picnic Memorial Service was held in 2005 at Holy Sepulchre Church in Ashington. The church is locally known as the 'Miners' Church' because of its close proximity to what was once the main entrance into Ashington Colliery.

The most moving part of the Memorial Service is the laying of wreaths in memory of relatives, friends and workmates ('marras') who gave a lifetime of service to the mining industry.

When the Service is held at Woodhorn, the wreaths are laid at the Woodhorn Colliery mining disaster memorial, which was transferred from Hirst Park in the town. The wreaths have been taken there if the Service has been held at Holy Sepulchre Church.

ADMVC and the Miners' Memorial Service

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir is proud to have performed at many of the Miners' Memorial Services in Ashington or at Woodhorn Museum.



Memorial Services in 2010 and 2015

Key Milestones for the Memorial Service

2005 – Holy Sepulchre Church, Ashington

The first Miners' Picnic Memorial Service was held at Holy Sepulchre Church in Ashington.

12.06.2010 - Holy Sepulchre Church, Ashington

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir performed three numbers during the Service at Holy Sepulchre Church. They included 'Shall We Gather at the River', 'The Colliers' Requiem' and 'My Lord, What a Morning'.

Children from the Northumberland C of E Academy sang 'The Water of Life'.

Both choirs supported the congregational singing of 'Fill Your Hearts with Joy and Gladness'.

14.06.2014 – Woodhorn Museum

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir took part in the Memorial Service at the 150th Anniversary of the Northumberland Miners' Picnic.

The Choir performed 'African Prayer', 'Gwahoddiaid' and 'The Colliers' Requiem'. They also supported the singing of the congregational hymn, 'Abide with Me'.

13.06.2015 – Woodhorn Museum

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir took part in the Memorial Service at Woodhorn Museum.

The Choir performed 'Yard, Seam!', 'Gwahoddiaid' and 'The Colliers' Requiem'. They also supported the singing of the congregational hymn, 'Abide with Me'.

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir

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

Also on Facebook and YouTube.

A Commemoration to the 40th Anniversary

08.06.2024 – Woodhorn Museum

It was appropriate that Ashington & District Male Voice Choir returned to support the Memorial Service at the Northumberland Miners' Picnic at Woodhorn Museum in 2024.

This coincided with the 40th Anniversary of the Miners' Strike. The Choir performed several events to commemorate the hardships of the region's coal miners and the impact on local communities

The Choir supported the congregational singing of 'Abide with Me'. It was fitting that they then performed 'The Colliers' Requiem', by Derek Hobbs and Mike Kirkup, just before the laying of wreaths at the Woodhorn Colliery mining disaster memorial.

The words are a lasting tribute to all coal miners:

'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'



The Miners' Memorial Service in 2024

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.