

## LOCAL CHOIR TO RECOGNISE THE HERITAGE OF ITS HOMETOWN!



Ashington was once considered to be the 'world's largest coal-mining village'!

Well, the local community choir, Ashington & District Male Voice Choir is about to recognise the heritage of its hometown and people through music. The Choir has commissioned a new suite of heritage music about Ashington.

Neil Morton, the Choir's musical director, has already created and arranged two of the new songs and three more are to follow. 'Flow' is a beautiful melody which tells the story of Ashington. 'Glossy Black Diamonds' written by baritone, Alan Beattie and arranged by Neil for the Choir, is a powerful ballad, which tells the story of the rise and decline of coal-mining and other industries, and the opening of the rail line to Newcastle.

The members of the Choir will be starting to learn this new music after their 'Annual Concert' at St. John's Church in North Seaton on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> May and 'VE and VEP Concerts in Blyth and Cramlington during May and June.

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir will be launching this new suite of music at a 'Heritage Concert' in St. John's Church at North Seaton, Ashington on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This will be followed by a series of heritage concerts across Southeast Northumberland and Tyneside to celebrate the Choir's 110-Year Anniversary.

The programmes for the 2026 concerts will focus on promoting the region's rich heritage. They will include many coal-mining songs performed by local songwriters, Derek Hobbs and the late Mike Kirkup, such as 'The Colliers' Requiem' and 'Yard Seam, Bothal High!' from 'Fell 'em Doon'. There will also be some excellent arrangements of Northumbrian and Tyneside folk songs, such as 'Bobby Shafto', 'Dance to ye Daddy' and 'The Water of Tyne'.

Kevin Lillie, the Choir's public relations and stakeholder officer explains, 'This is a great initiative for the Choir to be able recognise the heritage of Ashington, some of the people who have made the town famous and the strength of community spirit. It is fitting that the Choir with such a long tradition in the town can mark all of these achievements through music.'

'Singing in a choir can have so many benefits for both your health and social wellbeing. This is a great time to be part of Ashington & District Male Voice Choir. Why don't you come along to one of our rehearsals at Stakeford & Bomarsund Sports & Welfare Centre on a Thursday evening between 7 and 9pm. You could be singing this new music and celebrating 'Ashington' in 2026.'

Ashington & District Male Voice Choir continues to recruit new members as it looks to build towards its 110-year anniversary in 2026 and ultimately 200 years. You do not need to have previous singing experience and you will be made very welcome. Singing in the Choir can be so much fun but also good for your health and wellbeing.

You can learn more about joining the Choir and be able to find recordings and video links from their concerts on their website, <https://www.ashingtonmalevoicechoir.org.uk>. They are also on Facebook and YouTube.