

## The difficult birth of Kildwick and Farnhill Institute

On its website, the Kildwick and Farnhill Institute says the building was “purchased by the Brigg family of Kildwick Hall in 1911, and donated to the two villages in memory of Sir John Brigg”. In fact, the creation of the institute was a good deal more complicated than that.



We’ve recently looked at how the development of the institute was reported in the Keighley News, in 1911.

### The initial announcement – Keighley News 11<sup>th</sup> March 1911

It all seems to have started very suddenly – on an inside page of the Keighley News dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1911, with an article headlined “The Village Institute Project at Farnhill”.

The idea for an institute clearly came from the Brigg family; most particularly from W. A. Brigg, one of the sons of Sir John Brigg, the MP for Keighley and tenant of Kildwick Hall. He had already decided which building was to be used:

*In taking the initial step towards providing Kildwick and Farnhill with a village institute, Mr. W. A. Brigg has given further evidence of his interest in the social welfare of the two villages. The building which Mr. Brigg intends to give – providing the public of Farnhill and Kildwick are in favour of his proposal – is a two-storeyed warehouse in the Farnhill Main Street, occupied some years ago by Mr. Aked as a wool warehouse.*



The photograph above shows the mill warehouse building in 1906.

**Note:** Aked's mill building was on the opposite side of Main Street; the boiler exhaust was piped under the road and out through the chimney, shown here being demolished. Quite why this mill was closed down in 1906 isn't known. However, Mr. Aked was also the operator of Airedale Mill, on the main Skipton to Keighley road which was destroyed in a fire in March 1906. Perhaps the losses sustained in the fire made the continued operation of the mill in Main Street unviable.

Mr. Brigg thought the building was well suited and had some ideas on how it could be used:

*The building is sufficiently large [and] ... with alterations can be converted into an institute of some seven or eight spacious rooms. If swimming or slipper baths are erected – an idea which appears to be favourably received by the villagers – probably five rooms will be available.*

**Note:** Few of the houses in Farnhill or Kildwick were equipped with bathrooms.

The article goes on to describe a meeting, held in the building on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March, at which the Chairman, Mr. T. R. Williams, spoke in favour of including baths or wash-houses as part of the development – noting that baths had recently been provided in the institutes at Sutton Mills and at Glusburn.

He recommended that:

*... it would be worth their while to establish slipper baths in the upper storey of the building and have the institute on the ground floor.*

However, the general view of the meeting was a little different:

*There would have to be three rooms in the Institute, at least – a billiard room, a smoke-room, and a reading room. The feeling seemed to be in favour of a village institute first of all, with the possibility of baths and wash-houses following.*

The Methodist minister, Rev. Middleton, wondered how they thought a success could be made of the proposed institute when the Kildwick Parish Room seemed to have been a failure ?

*The Chairman said the Parish Room was Church property and its use was determined by the Church. It was enacted in the deeds that the Parish Room must be kept under strict control, and that, of course, had introduced an element into the government of the institution which had no doubt been in some measure responsible for its failure.*

The following evening a self-appointed committee of seven villagers, led by Mr. Williams, called on W. A. Brigg to confirm his willingness to transfer ownership of the building to a group of trustees “for the benefit of the inhabitants of Kildwick and Farnhill”.

*Mr. Brigg said he would hand over the building conditionally – one condition being that the proposed institute must never be under the control of any political party or religious body ... A second stipulation was that no intoxicating liquors be sold on the institute premises.*

It was also agreed that experts would be consulted about the:

*... cost of altering the upper storey of the building, furnishing it, and fitting it with soundproof partitions. It was also suggested that the experts be asked to submit estimates as to the cost of putting in a billiard table, and erecting a staircase outside the building, in order that the upper storey might be approached without the rooms on the ground floor being entered. It was decided to make a recommendation at a public meeting to be held in a few weeks in favour of the work being carried out in accordance with the estimates, and of allowing the question of baths and wash-houses to remain in abeyance until the committee were sure of their financial position.*

## **The public meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> March 1911**

The promised public meeting, again held in the building that would become the institute, and reported in the Keighley News on 25<sup>th</sup> March, began with the Chairman, T. R. Williams, outlining the proposed layout of the upper floor:

*In this plan the billiard and card room occupied nearly half the area of the upper room, the remaining space being taken up by smoke- and reading rooms, a lavatory, and steward's room to be used for the sale of tobacco and aerated waters, etc.*

He also persevered with his idea for the inclusion of baths and wash-houses, only now these would form part of a future plan for the ground floor of the building.

The cost of the refurbishment would be substantial:

*... he had been furnished with statements which gave the probable cost as £355-2s-6d. In addition to that amount they could venture to add £60 or £70 for meeting the cost of articles which the experts had overlooked.*

There were also plans to pay for staff and to cover running costs:

*... if they had fifty-two members who paid 5s each they would have more than sufficient money to pay a steward or caretaker. Other expenses would therefore have to be met from [use of] the billiard table, etc.*

But how was the building work to be paid for? Mr. Williams was rather vague on that; he said:

*Unfortunately those who were in most need of an institute and who would derive the most benefit and enjoyment from it were the least able to bear the cost of erecting one. They would have to appeal to those who were able to assist them.*

At this point the Chairman invited W. A. Brigg to address the meeting. Perhaps Mr. Williams hoped that W. A. Brigg would recognise himself as one of “those who were able to assist them”. In fact, when he spoke, Mr. Brigg had a mixed message:

*Finding the money would, no doubt, be rather difficult, but the best course to adopt would be to begin with a few donations. His father, Sir John Brigg, had promised £50. (Applause.) That left them with nearly £300 to obtain. If they desired they could find the money by placing a mortgage on the building. If they did not care to go to that extent it might be necessary to put down the money on loan at the rate of 4%.*

Mr. Brigg also had some ideas about the use of the ground floor:

*... they might have an assembly room, which might also be made to serve the purpose of a gymnasium by removing the flagstones, putting down a wooden floor, and removing the pillars, which, he had been informed were not really necessary. By this means they might convert the lower area into a hall to hold between 150 and 300 persons that might be utilised for concerts and socials, the proceeds of which could be directed to the general maintenance of the institute.*

**Note:** He did not specifically mention, but almost certainly had in mind, the possibility of using this space to hold dances. Throughout his life W. A. Brigg was a keen ballroom dancer.

With this, the idea of including swimming baths as part of the institute appears to have been killed-off. However, he did conclude with support for Mr. Williams' pet scheme:

*They might also possibly find room – if they thought it was desirable, and he was of the opinion that it was – for a few slipper baths.*

The meeting ended on an upbeat note when J. J. Brigg, W. A. Brigg's twin brother, announced that he would give the institute a billiard table and cues.

**Note:** The billiard table, which came from Kildwick Hall remained in the institute until it was refurbished in the 1960s. Part of the slate surface is still in the village – it supports the seat by the side of the road in High Farnhill.

## A revised cost estimate – Keighley News 15<sup>th</sup> April 1911

It seems that despite Mr. Williams' and Mr. Brigg's call for donations there was no substantial amounts forthcoming and, on 15<sup>th</sup> April, the Keighley News reported the financial problems being faced:

*At the outset ... it was generally felt that a venture saddling the villagers with a debt of £300 would be almost certainly doomed to failure. It has also been realised – upon later consideration – that the cost of maintenance will be much higher than was first estimated.*

Even the building costs were increasing:

*Mr. Russell Williams, who has taken a very active interest in the matter, and whose initial estimate of the cost amounted to £450, has made a thorough investigation of all the circumstances, in the company of an architect, since the first meeting. The architect's calculations raised the probable cost to a slightly higher figure.*

W. A. Brigg had to step in to underwrite the increasing cost of the scheme:

*A deputation then visited Mr. Brigg at Kildwick Hall and the changed aspect was considered. It was decided ... that instead of handing over the building to a board of trustees, as was at first agreed, Mr. Brigg should retain possession of the property until such time as he is satisfied that there is a permanent appreciation of his gift, but that the committee be allowed to proceed along the lines of the architect's plan, the cost to be met by a cheque from Mr. Brigg.*

At least the name of the building looked to be settled:

*The villagers are anxious to name the place "The Brigg Institute", and unless Mr. Brigg [has] serious objection that course is likely to be adopted. The suggestion is a happy one, and if carried out would be a public remembrancer of the generosity of those who placed the institute with such magnificent possibilities at the disposal of the people.*

## Sir John Brigg steps in – 28<sup>th</sup> April 1911

Eventually it was left to the only person who could save the scheme to step forward. On 6<sup>th</sup> May the Keighley News carried this very short announcement:

*A meeting of the Farnhill Institute Committee was held yesterday evening week. Mr. W. A. Brigg intimated that Sir John Brigg, MP, intended defraying the cost of converting the old warehouse in Farnhill into an institute and of furnishing it. This would incur an expenditure of over £500. Mr. Brigg further stated that Sir John wished the institute to take the form of a Coronation memorial.*

**Note:** The coronation of King George V took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1911.



## The Institute takes shape – Keighley News 26<sup>th</sup> August 1911

Finally then, work on the “Coronation Institute” began and, in the issue date 26<sup>th</sup> August, the Keighley News was able to report:

*... the necessary alterations have proceeded apace. The outside of the building presents a very neat appearance. The windows are of the small French pattern ... The entrance to the basement room is at the west-end of the building. At the opposite end will be constructed two slipper baths, lavatories, etc. The billiard room on the first floor will be reached by a passage commencing at the top of a staircase erected on the outside of the building at the south-east corner. At the south side will be a reading room, and on the north side a smoke-room and caretaker's office. No pains are being spared to make the institute comfortable and attractive.*

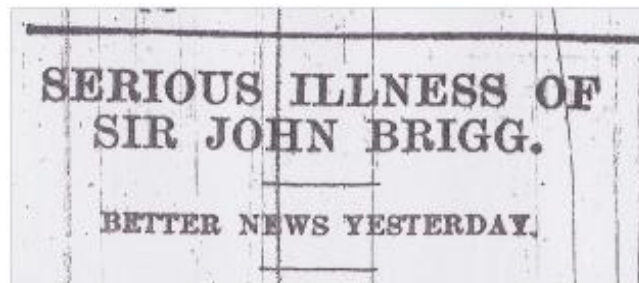


**Note:** This view of the institute building was used on a postcard sent in 1924. News reports at the time of its opening described the front of the building being covered with ivy.

## **Fate intervenes – September/October 1911**

Of course the institute would not be called the “Coronation Institute” and if it was to commemorate anyone, it would be Sir John Brigg. It’s easy to document why:

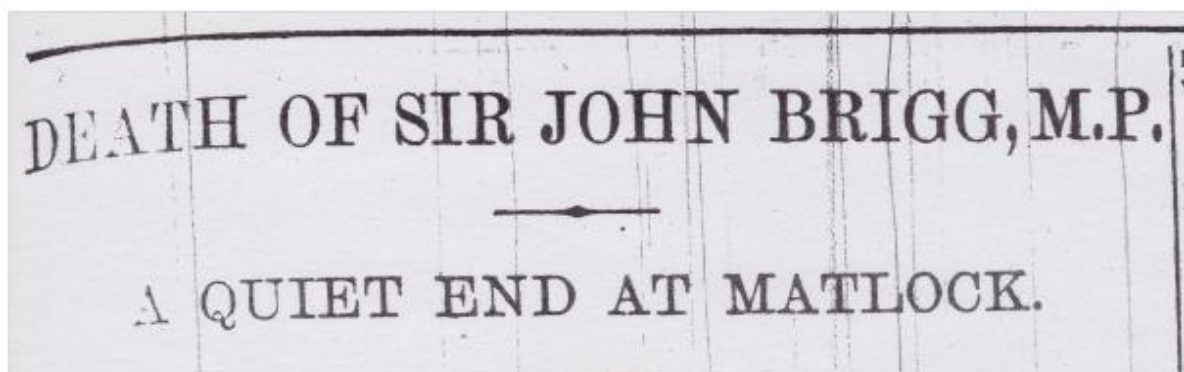
### **Keighley News - 23<sup>rd</sup> September**



### **Keighley News - 30<sup>th</sup> September**



### **Keighley News - 7<sup>th</sup> October**



Sir John Brigg died at the home of his daughter and son-in-law on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1911. He was 77.

## **The election of a committee, and a change of name – 6<sup>th</sup> November 1911**

With the building work nearing completion, a meeting was held in the billiard room, on 6<sup>th</sup> November, to elect a committee to run the institute. W. A. Brigg addressed the meeting and began by noting that “a good many things had happened since they last met under that roof”. He went on:

*He had no doubt that in the course of a month the building would be ready for opening ... With regard to the proprietorship the building would remain just as it was at present – his property, but he proposed to lease the building at a nominal rent to the members of the institute.*

He hoped that the institute would be:

*... a place which anyone might be proud to go and sit in, whether they lived at Kildwick Hall or elsewhere. ... He did not want it to be so much a public institution but an adjunct to their own home. Many of them could not afford a billiard table in their own house, nor even a bath, and these would be provided at the institute. The objects of the institute might be described as the moral and intellectual well-being of the inhabitants ... [and the institute should] become affiliated with the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes and have a lending library, for that was one of the greatest needs in the village. (Applause.)*

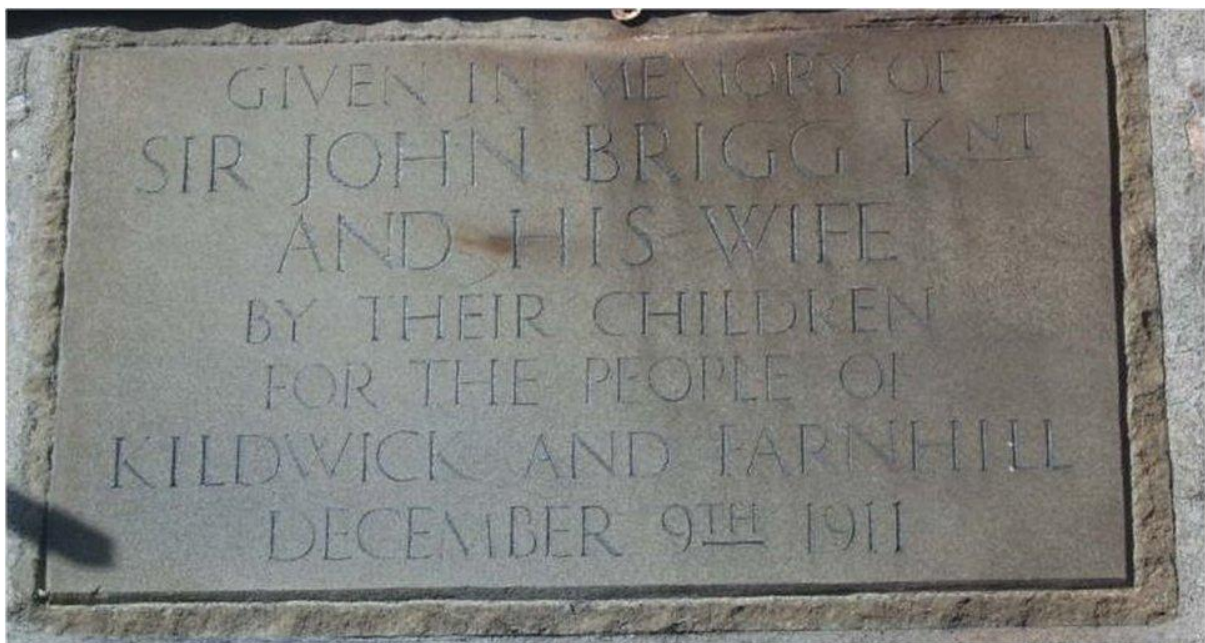
Mr. Williams then asked the meeting to reconsider the name of the institute:

*He thought that it was only courteous and wise to call the institution "The Brigg Institute". The reason would be obvious and that the name would represent a lasting recognition of the generosity of those to whom they were indebted.*

At the end of the meeting a committee was elected and W. A. Brigg unanimously appointed president.

### **The opening ceremony – 9<sup>th</sup> December 1911**

The official opening ceremony for the institute took place, as reported in the Keighley News dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 1911, in appalling weather, on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December.



The building was opened by Miss Dorothy Anderton Sharpe, the grand-daughter of Sir John Brigg, who was presented with a gold key by the architect. The Kildwick Brass Band played musical selections, including Sir John's favourite hymn "O God our help in ages past".

The programme of the opening ceremony is included in an Appendix.



After speeches thanking the Brigg family for their generosity had been made:

*Miss Sharpe, who was presented with a bouquet by Miss Hill, briefly responded, and said she hoped that the institute would be a great benefit to the villagers. (Applause.) Mr. J. J. Brigg, who responded on behalf of the family, paid tribute to Mr. T. R. Williams as a member of the committee, and went on to describe the institute as a place where the inhabitants of Kildwick and Farnhill would be able to enjoy advantage which they did not have at home. (Applause.) The proceedings, which were interspersed with part-songs by Kildwick National School scholars, closed with a verse of the National Anthem.*

That evening, the institute held its first public entertainment; at which "Mr. W. A. Brigg presided over a crowded audience".

### **The Brigg family gift the Institute to the village – 1920**

By 1920 it was clear that Kildwick and Farnhill Institute was on a steady footing and, in a legal Deed of Gift dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920, the members of the Brigg family formally handed over the institute building to the trustees.

The Kildwick and  
Farnhill Institute.



Deed of Gift.

Dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920.

William Anderton Brigg Esq.  
and Others.

to

The Rev<sup>d</sup> Christopher Edward V. Hodge  
and Others.

Deed of Gift  
OF

The Kildwick and Farnhill  
Institute

Rev. C.E.V. Hodge was one of the Ex-Officio trustees named in the document. The others being:

Thomas Laidlaw; The Manse, Farnhill	Methodist Minister
Christopher Smith; Kildwick Grange	Rural District Councillor for Kildwick
George Bottomley	Rural District Councillor for Farnhill
Samuel Hepworth	Chairman of Kildwick Parish Meeting
William Anderton Brigg	Chairman of Farnhill Parish Council

The Representative Trustees were:

Arthur Ellis	Appointed by Farnhill Parish Council
Thomas Latham	Appointed by Farnhill Parish Council
Tom Wrathall	Appointed by Farnhill Parish Council
Thomas Appleby, schoolmaster	Appointed by the institute committee
William Green, butcher	Appointed by the institute committee
Charley Hill, joiner	Appointed by the institute committee
Robert Parker, engine tester	Appointed by the institute committee
Harry Roe, costs clerk	Appointed by the institute committee
John Arthur Smith, textile merchant	Appointed by the institute committee
Cecil Robert Snowden, sub-postmaster	Appointed by the institute committee

Other trustees were:

- The five children of Sir John Brigg
- Herbert Kitson, joiner
- Julius Spencer, sanitary inspector
- Lillian Laycock, a married woman
- Mary Jane Baldwin, widow
- Sarah Hannah Sugden, spinster

## **Afterthought – Was the creation of the institute a political gesture ?**

Consider the following:

- The Brigg family were profoundly political and staunchly Liberal. By 1911, Sir John had been the Liberal M.P. for Keighley for over 15 years. His elder twin sons were also actively involved in local politics: W. A. Brigg (who would become mayor of Keighley 1912–1916) was a member of the town council, and J. J. Brigg was a county councillor.
- The relationship between the Brigg family and their landlord, Mathew Amcotts Wilson, a leading Conservative and Unionist, was never good. In fact it never really recovered after the 1899 Kildwick typhoid epidemic, following which Mathew Wharton Wilson had taken advantage of John Brigg's concern for the village in which he lived to rather scape-goat him and point all the blame in his direction, while denying his own responsibility as land owner.
- T. R. Williams was an aspiring Labour politician. In 1912 he was included on the party's list of approved candidates and just a few months later he was adopted as the Labour party parliamentary candidate for Darlington.

So what has this got to do with the institute ?

In 1911, just before W. A. Brigg put forward his proposals for the institute in Farnhill, plans were already being made for the creation of a Unionist Club in Kildwick. Money for this project was raised by prominent Conservative party donors in the area and the land for the building was donated by Mathew Amcotts Wilson, from the Kildwick estate. (The building, situated between the White Lion and the river is now used as the New Church Centre.)

Could it be that the Brigg family and T. R. Williams wanted to set up the institute, as a counter to the proposed Unionist club – to take the wind out of the sails of the Conservatives and to give “one in the eye” to Mathew Wilson ?

## Appendix – Opening ceremony programme

Kildwick and Farnhill Institute.

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### **OPENING CEREMONY.**

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*The Officers and Committee have pleasure in announcing  
that the above Institute will be Opened*

On SATURDAY, December 9th, 1911,

At 3-30 p.m., by

**Miss Dorothy Anderton Sharpe,**

*(Grand-daughter of the late Sir John Brigg)*

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**Kildwick Prize Band** will be in attendance.

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☙ *A PUBLIC TEA* ☙

Will be served in the Primitive Methodist School, Farnhill, at 4-30

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### **A CONCERT**

Will be held in the Assembly Room of the Institute at 7-30 p.m.

**Chairman: W. A. BRIGG, Esq., M.A. (President).**

ARTISTES :

*Soprano: Miss Edith Barrett; Contralto: Miss Eva Yeadon;*

*Tenor: Mr. Fred Popplewell; Baritone: Mr. Fred Sugden.*

*Accompanist: Mr. Edward Spencer.*

An Address will be delivered by

**SIR SWIRE SMITH, KT.**

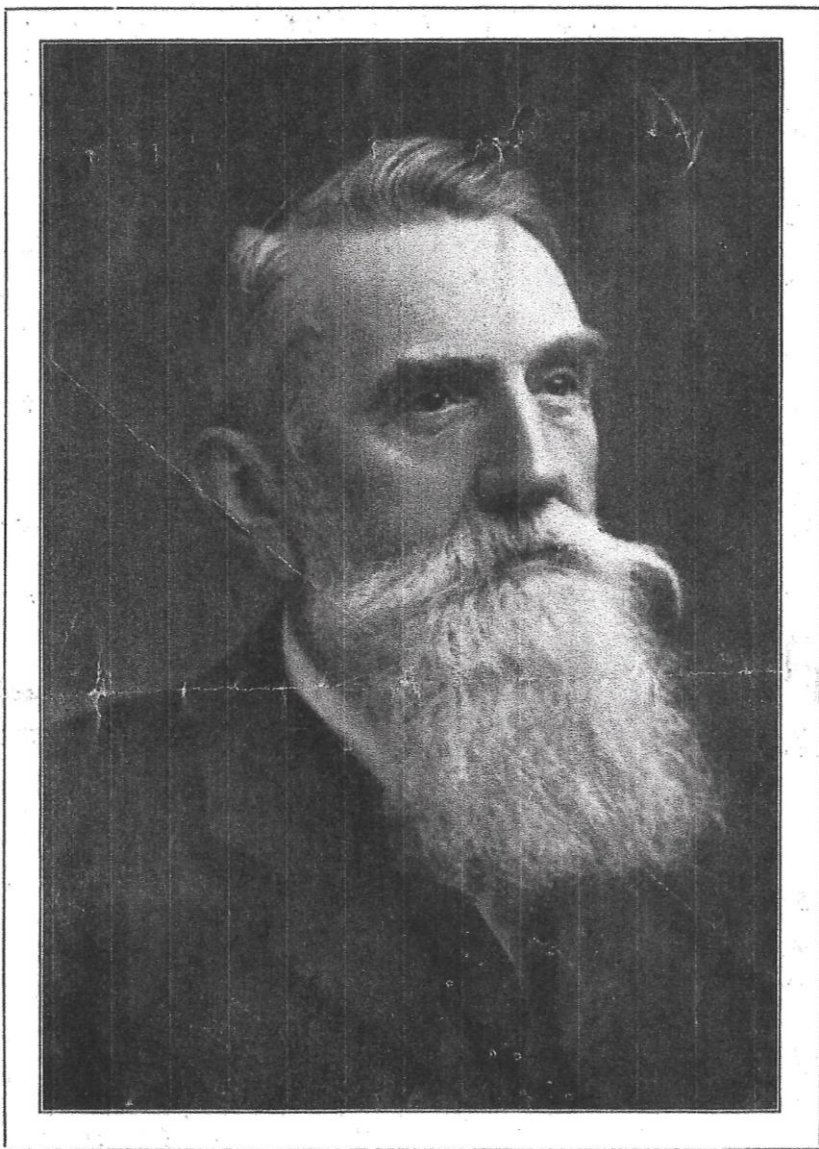
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Tickets for Tea and Entertainment, 9d.; Children under 12, 6d.  
Tea only, 6d.; Entertainment only, 6d.; Reserved Seats, 6d. extra.

Tickets may be obtained at the door or from the  
Members of the Committee.





Sir JOHN BRIGG, Kt., M.P.

Born September 21st, 1834 :

Died September 30th, 1911.

# MEMOIR.

**S**IR JOHN BRIGG, who lived at Kildwick Hall from 1883 until his death in 1911, was born in 1834 at Guard House, on the western outskirts of Keighley, where his family had been freeholders for several centuries.

His ancestors had become Quakers under the influence of the missionaries of George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, in 1652, and they remained in that body for several generations, only leaving it to join the Congregationalists, at a time when the strict rules of the Society expelled any member who married outside it.

Mr. John Brigg followed his father, who bore the same name, as a leader among the Keighley Congregationalists, and as a Magistrate.

His services to his native town and county, in education and in all movements for the improvement of mind and heart, have been fully recorded in the public Press at the time of his recent death, and were recognized by his fellow-citizens, who five times sent him as their member to the Commons House of Parliament, and by his Sovereign, who conferred on him the order for Knighthood, two years ago.

His kindly, unassuming manner, endeared him to his neighbours in all walks of life, and whilst he faithfully did his work in Parliament, in face of great physical disability, he ever delighted to return to his beautiful home at Kildwick, and it could be truly said of him, that he "dwelt among his own people."

The Institute, now being opened, is dedicated to the memory, not only of him, but of Mrs. Brigg, who died at Kildwick Hall in 1896. Although long an invalid, and therefore less well-known to her neighbours, she was full of kindly thoughts for their welfare, while to her family she left the memory of the best of mothers.



## Programme.

Chairman's Speech.

Quartette ... "Brightly dawns our Wedding Day" ... *Sullivan*  
Song ... "Good Company" ... *Adams*  
Mr. Fred Popplewell.

### Address by SIR SWIRE SMITH.

Song ... "June's Golden Song" ... *Cowdell*  
Miss Eva Yeadon.  
Duet ... "Spirit of the Wood" ... *Parker*  
Miss Barrett and Mr. Sugden.  
Song ... "Bedouin Love Song" ... *Pinsuti*  
Mr. Fred Sugden.  
Song ... "The Pipes of Pan" ... *Monator.*  
Miss Edith Barrett.  
Duet ... "Springtime" ... *Newton*  
Miss Yeadon and Mr. Popplewell.

### INTERVAL.

Quartette ... "Old King Cole" ... *Smith*  
Songs { ... "Look down, Sweet Eyes" ... *Fisher*  
... "The Bee and the Flower" ... *Thompson*  
Miss Eva Yeadon.  
Song ... "Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes" ... *Sullivan*  
Mr. Fred Popplewell.  
Duet ... "Two Beggars" ... *Wilson*  
Messrs. Popplewell and Sugden.  
Song ... "The Moorish Maid" ... *Parker*  
Miss Edith Barrett.  
Song ... "Reuben Ranzo" ... *Coates*  
Mr. Fred Sugden.  
Quartette ... "In this Hour" ... *Pinsuti*

## Acknowledgements

Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group are pleased to acknowledge the support we receive from Kildwick and Farnhill Institute.

The photograph shown on page 2 was contributed to our archive by Mrs. Jill Ideson; the one shown on page 6 was contributed by Keighley and District Digital Archive.

The programme for the opening ceremony was contributed by Ken Webb.